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**The relationships between timing of injury onset in the sport season and emotional response to injury**

**A Thesis Presented  
to the  
Department of Kinesiology  
Lakehead University**

**In Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Masters of Science  
in  
Kinesiology**

**by  
Amy M. Gayman**

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## **Abstract**

**The relationship between the timing of injury onset in the sport season and athletes' emotional reaction to sport injury was investigated. Twenty (10 male and 10 female) varsity and recreational athletes involved in the sport of basketball were interviewed by the researcher to determine what variables athletes consider when faced with an injury at different times of the season (pre, mid, end, post) and how these variables affect their emotional response. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed using the software program, NUD-IST. Variables including importance of the season, length of season, time remaining in year, injury status, circumstances of injury, previous experience, success of team, team involvement, goals, athlete status, personal success, social influences, and external considerations were found to influence athletes' appraisal of the timing of injury onset which in turn, affected their emotional response to the injury experience. A model is presented to explain this appraisal.**

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**The relationships between timing of injury onset in the sport season and emotional response to injury**

**Injury within the sport setting is inevitable. Although many innovative techniques have been developed in an attempt to control the causal factors of athletic injury, recent studies show that the number of injuries in sport increases each year (Ahern & Lohr, 1997; Crossman, 1997; Cupal, 1998; Rotella & Heyman, 1998). For the past 10 years, injury has become a dominant topic in the study of sport psychology. Researchers now realize that the treatment of athletic injuries extends far beyond physical healing. Not only are injured athletes forced to contend with the physical barriers to successful recovery, they must also overcome a wide array of mental hurdles before they are able to re-enter the competitive scene (Rotella & Heyman).**

**Athletes respond to the injury experience in very different ways (Brewer, 1994; Brewer, 2001; Flint, 1998; Smith, Scott, O'Fallon, & Young, 1990). In many cases, sport injury can have a detrimental impact on athletes who are unable to effectively cope with the mental consequences that coincide with the occurrence of the athletic injury. Therefore, it is imperative that sport psychologists, healthcare professionals, and coaches understand the psychological effects of sport injury to effectively treat injured athletes (Crossman, 1997; Johnston & Carroll, 1998; Leddy, Lambert, & Ogles, 1994; Smith, 1996; Quackenbush & Crossman, 1994).**

**Unfortunately, many professionals in the health community do not possess a strong foundation of knowledge that will allow them to identify athletes who require psychological support during the rehabilitation process (Brewer, 2001; Crossman, 1997; Gordon, Milios, & Grove, 1991; Lamba & Crossman, 1997). Larson, Starkey, and Zaichkowsky (1996) surveyed 499 athletic trainers and found that only 54.1% of participants had taken a formal course on sport psychology even though almost 90% felt that it was “relatively important” or “very important” to**

help athletes overcome the psychological effects of injury that inhibit successful recovery. Larson et al., emphasize the importance of incorporating the psychology of sport injury into athletic training programs. If the members of an athlete's support team can identify the factors that hinder the rehabilitation process then psychological intervention strategies could be implemented to help combat the adverse effects of sport injury (Larson et al.; Smith, 1996).

Before psychological intervention strategies can be introduced to injured athletes during rehabilitation however, additional research on the psychological consequences of sport injury is required. In particular, an enhanced understanding of the emotional responses of athletes to the injury experience is needed in order to facilitate their psychological adjustment throughout the rehabilitation process and their eventual return to sport (Cupal, 1998).

In the past, researchers used stage models based on theories of grief and loss of health to describe the emotional adjustment experienced by athletes following the onset of injury. The Kubler-Ross (1969) model of death and dying, for instance, has been adopted by many authors to conclude that athletes progress through a series of predictable emotional states, similar to individuals facing the threat of illness or the possibility of death. From this perspective, injured athletes proceed through the following stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression - culminating in the acceptance of the injury and his/her return to sport (Cupal, 1998; Rotella & Heyman, 1998; Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Beck, 1997).

Recently however, stage-based models have been criticized for a number of reasons. The fact that these models are used to draw inferences regarding the emotional response of athletes to injury when the original theories were generated from the observations of non-athletic populations, threatens the external validity of stage-based research. Generalizations from

populations of non-athletes to athletes cannot be made because the two populations differ psychologically. Therefore, the response of athletes to the injury situation may not be the same as the grief response experienced by individuals facing a terminal illness (Rose & Jevne, 1993; Smith et al., 1990; Smith, 1996). Secondly, stage-based models fail to consider that the emotional reaction of athletes to the injury situation is unique to the individual's experience (Brewer, 2001). Recent data suggest that the emotional reaction of athletes is more complex than initially postulated (Brewer, 1994; Crossman, 1997). In general, athletes do not follow a logical sequence of psychological responses following the onset of a sport injury. Rather, each injured athlete reacts to the injury experience differently (Brewer, 2001; Brewer, Linder, & Phelps, 1995).

Smith et al. (1990), for instance, administered the Profile of Mood States (POMS, McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971) and the Emotional Responses to Athletic Injury Questionnaire (ERAIQ, Smith, Scott, & Wiese, 1990) to 73 injured athletes immediately following consultation with a physician and then at 2-week intervals for 4 months or until the athlete returned to sport. Initial results indicated that the most severely injured athletes who were forced to stay out of sport the longest due to their injury experienced greater mood disturbances than other athletes with moderate to acute injuries. The scores of the severely injured group were also compared to previously published college norms and once again the severely injured group of athletes scored significantly higher on the measures of tension, depression, and anger. These findings suggest that the emotional adjustment to athletic injury is a subjective process unique to each individual. Injured athletes do not experience the same emotions, to the same degree during rehabilitation.

Some athletes do not experience negative emotions following sport injury (Wiese-Bjornstal, Smith, Shafer, & Morrey, 1998). Although Smith et al. (1990) discovered significant differences between severely injured athletes and college norms on the POMS, the mood scores in the acute to moderately injured athletes studied by Smith et al. were significantly lower than previously published college norms. These findings are supported by a number of follow-up studies which also report that some injured athletes may respond less negatively to injury and cope better with the experience than others (Brewer et al., 1995; Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, Sklar, & Ditmar, 1995).

Nonetheless, many studies have shown that injured athletes often encounter negative emotions immediately following a sport injury. Chan and Grossman (1988) explored the psychological effects of injury on marathon runners. They found that athletes who were prevented from running due to injury exhibited significantly higher levels of depression, tension, and confusion on the POMS scale than the group of uninjured runners.

These findings are consistent with contemporary research on the relationship between sport injury and emotion. Pearson and Jones (1992) studied a group of 61 injured athletes and a non-injured control group (matched to the injured athletes in terms of gender, age, amount of exercise per week, and standard achievement) to determine the emotional effects of injury. Results on the Sportsman's Feelings After Injury Questionnaire (SFAIQ, Pearson & Jones) and the POMS clearly indicated that injured athletes were significantly more frustrated, hostile, depressed, bored, tired, and confused than uninjured controls.

Quackenbush and Crossman (1994) also found that athletes were likely to respond negatively to the onset of injury. The authors asked a total of 25 recreational and varsity athletes

who experienced an athletic injury within the last year to reflect on the different stages of their injury experience. For the period immediately following the occurrence of the injury, injured athletes reported feelings of anger, frustration, and discouragement.

Crossman, Gluck, and Jamieson (1995) discovered similar emotions in injured athletes. Once again, athletes reported negative feelings including guilt, anger, fear, disgust, and shame immediately following the onset of the sport injury. Although these feelings seemed to diminish over time, the researchers acknowledged that the negative emotions experienced by injured athletes should not be dismissed and warrant further psychological investigation.

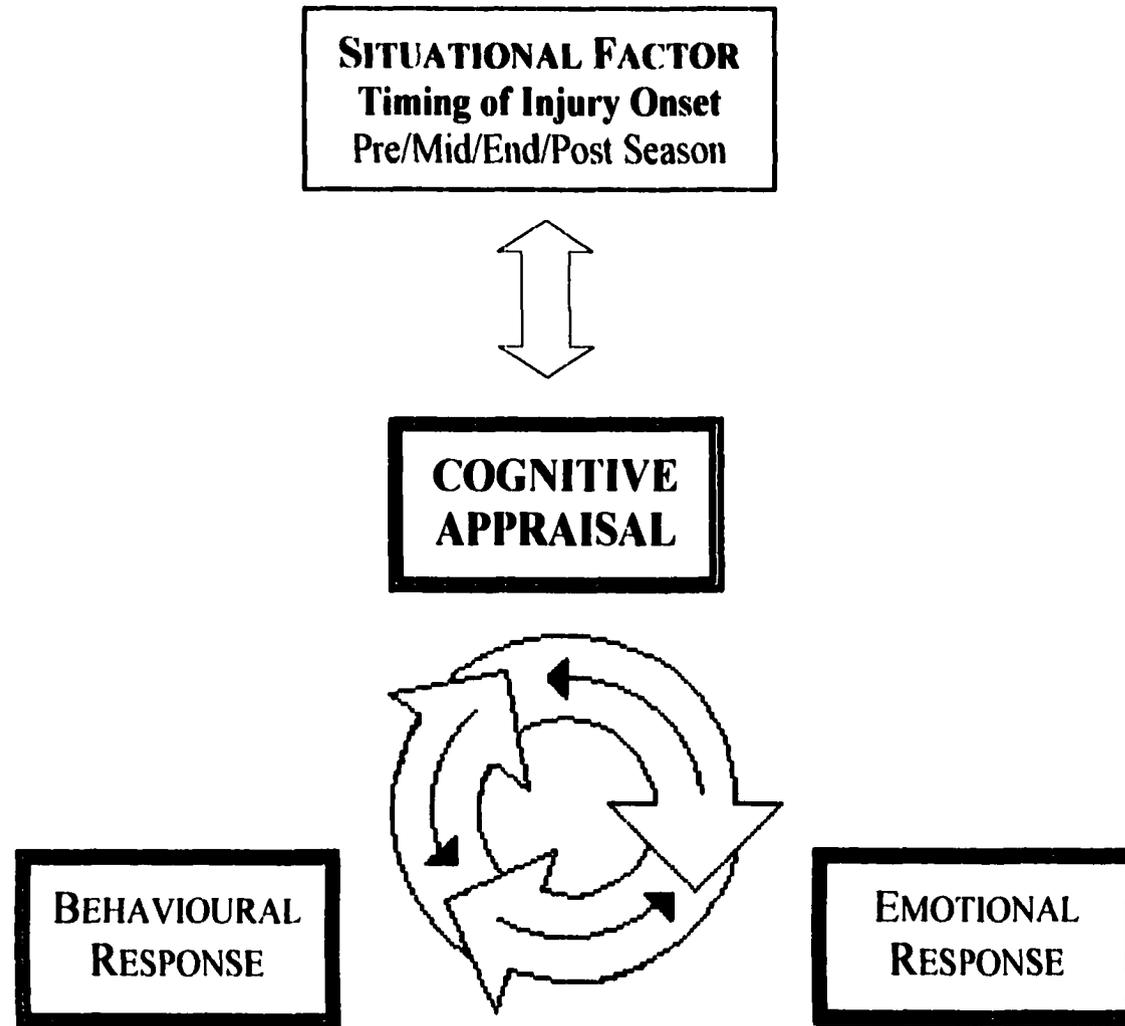
Such findings are not only limited to self-report measures. Qualitative methods have revealed that athletes encounter similar feelings. Udry et al., (1997) interviewed 21 members of the U.S. national ski team who had sustained a season-ending injury in the seasons from 1990 to 1994. Results from inductive data analysis (outlined by Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989) indicated that 90.5% of the athletes in the sample experienced negative emotions following the occurrence of their injury. Many athletes admitted that they felt frustrated, angry, worried, depressed, and upset in response to the injury.

Clearly, there is a relationship between the onset of injury and athletes' subsequent emotional response. The question that researchers have yet to answer is why some injured athletes experience greater levels of psychological distress than others. Consequently, researchers have turned to the theory of cognitive appraisal (Brewer, 1994; Brewer et al., 1995; Brewer, 2001; Kerr & Miller, 2001; Weiss & Troxel, 1986). Advocates of the theory of cognitive appraisal have explained the wide array of emotions encountered by injured athletes by exploring athletes' perceptions of the injury experience. Accordingly, the way that an athlete interprets and evaluates

his/her injury is an important determinant of his/her emotional and/or behavioural response to the injury experience (Brewer, 2001; Weiss & Troxel). If the athlete views the injury as a possible threat to his/her participation in sport, he/she will experience a negative emotional response. On the other hand, the same athlete may not respond negatively to the occurrence of a sport injury if his/her appraisal of the injury situation is positive and the athlete believes that he/she is able to cope with the injury experience (Kerr & Miller; Weiss & Troxel; Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998).

It is important to note that this cognitive appraisal is influenced by a variety of personal and situational factors. Personal factors are characteristics of the athlete that are an inherent part of his/her personality disposition and remain constant across all situations. Self-esteem, trait anxiety, and locus of control, for instance, are examples of personal influences on an individual's cognitive appraisal. Situational factors are events in the athlete's social and physical environment that are unstable and can not be controlled by the athlete. Injury severity, injury status, injury duration, personal control over rehabilitation, recovery progress, physical impairment, level of social support, and the time of season that the injury occurs have been cited as possible situational influences on athletes' emotional response to sport injury (Brewer et al., 1995; Brewer, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Weiss & Troxel, 1986).

One situational factor that has received very little attention in the literature is timing of the injury in the sport season. Figure 1 illustrates how athletes' appraisal of the timing of injury onset in the sport season can impact their subsequent emotional and/or behavioural responses. When athletes are faced with an injury situation, a positive or negative emotional/behavioural reaction is evoked by their appraisal of the timing of the injury in the sport season (See Wiese-Bjornstal et al., 1998 for a detailed explanation).



**Figure 1:** Timing of injury onset as a situational factor considered in the appraisal of the injury situation (Weise-Bjornstal et al., 1998).

For instance, researchers suggested that if an athlete incurs an injury at the beginning of the sport season, he/she may not encounter the same level of negative affect as an athlete who is injured at the middle of the season. The earlier the injury occurs, the more optimistic the athlete may be to return to sport without completely missing the competitive season (Weiss & Troxel, 1986). In contrast, athletes who become injured at the end of the season or during the post season may be devastated by the possibility that they may not be able to return to sport before the end of the season or before the start of a very important competition (Flint, 1998; Kerr & Miller, 2001). The emotional consequences of season-ending injuries may continue into the next competitive season (Heil, 1993). As a result, these athletes may respond more negatively to the injury experience (Flint). Similarly, one athlete may be devastated by the fact that his/her injury occurred during the post-season and he/she was unable to participate in one of the most important games of his/her athletic career while another athlete may view the same situation positively. This athlete may view the injury as an opportunity to withdraw from an exceptionally bad season. In this respect, the athlete who is devastated by his/her injury is more likely to encounter negative emotions than the athlete who has a positive outlook on the same situation.

The cognitive appraisal made by the athlete may be more complex than originally thought. Athletes' appraisal of the timing of injury occurrence may be modified by any number of situational and personal variables that are inherent to the cognitive appraisal made by the athlete (Weiss & Troxel, 1986). In this sense, situational and personal variables can't be separated because they influence one another (Kerr & Miller, 2001). There may be an interaction between different situational and personal variables that produces either a positive or a negative view of the injury situation and in turn, results in a positive or negative emotional/behavioural response

(Bianco, Malo, & Orlick, 1999). For instance, one athlete might view the timing of the injury negatively while another athlete might appraise the timing of the injury positively and enjoy the secondary gains or indirect benefits of the injury situation including greater social support, rest from training, and increased assistance with chores (Kerr & Miller, 2001; Udry, 1997). Personal and situational variables may lead athletes to interpret the impact of injury during a particular time in the season differently.

To date, however, support for these assumptions is non-existent. Although researchers have recognized the importance of studying the relationship between timing of injury onset and athletes' emotional reaction to sport injury, research on the timing of sport injury in relation to the competitive season has yet to be conducted (Brewer, 1994; Crossman, 1997; Flint, 1998). According to Flint, literature on this topic is merely based on anecdotal comments. Researchers do not know what personal and situational variables affect athletes' appraisal of the timing of the injury in the sport season.

The purpose of the present research, therefore, was to determine the relationships between timing of injury onset in the sport season and athletes' emotional response to injury by using grounded theory to identify the variables athletes consider in their appraisal of the injury situation. From this a model that can explain the different variables influencing athletes' cognitive appraisal, emotional reaction and behavioural response to the injury experience may be developed for each time of the season athletes could become injured.

## Method

### Mode of Inquiry

A qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate research method to determine the factors related to timing of injury onset. Researchers have contended that qualitative methods should be employed to investigate the psychology of athletic injury because it is a relatively complex phenomenon that remains virtually unexplored (Bianco et al., 1999; Evans & Hardy, 1995; Johnston & Carroll, 1998). In this respect, qualitative research methods may provide insight into athletes' interpretations of the injury situation without being influenced by researchers' opinions (Gould et al., 1997; Johnston & Carroll; Udry et al., 1997). Past researchers have also suggested that qualitative methodology can provide insight into relatively complex and unexplored areas in the psychology of sport injury by documenting athletes' subjective opinions on the process of experiencing an athletic injury (Brewer, 1994; Gould et al.; Johnston & Carroll).

### Participants

A total of 20 ( $n=10$  male and  $n=10$  female) athletes involved in the sport of basketball at the recreational ( $n=10$ ) and varsity ( $n=10$ ) level of participation volunteered to participate in the present study. The mean age of participants was 22.10 years ( $SD = 1.77$  years). All athletes had experienced an injury at some point in their athletic endeavours and averaged 9.89 years involved in the sport of basketball. All athletes weren't actually injured at the time of the interviews because the researchers felt that situational variables including injury status and previous experience with injury might influence the type of appraisal made by each group.

## Measures

**Demographic Questionnaire.** Participants were given a demographic questionnaire created by the researcher to measure demographic variables including age, gender, level of sport, position played, number of years involved in sport, perceived athleticism, the importance of sport to the athlete's life, and previous experience with injury. In addition, athletes were asked to indicate the number of weeks allocated for each time of the season (See Appendix A).

**Interview Schedule.** An interview schedule (also devised by the researcher) consisting of pre-determined questions and probes was used by the researcher to standardize the interviews and minimize the effects of interviewer and reactive biases (See Appendix B).

## Operational Definitions

After speaking to athletes involved in the sport of basketball, the researcher decided on four time periods to base the interview questions on including pre, mid, end, and post-season. Pre-season was defined to participants as the training period before the season begins. Mid-season was explained as the middle of the season in which exhibition games are played. End-season was defined as the last few weeks of the season when the team is trying to make the playoffs and post-season was described as the playoffs.

## Procedures

Once approval to complete the study was obtained from the University's Ethics Advisory Committee, pilot interviews with three athletes who did not participate in the study were conducted by the researcher who has been trained to conduct qualitative interviews. The interviews were videotaped to allow a second researcher to review the tapes and then discuss the questions that were used and the interview style with the primary researcher. This precaution was

taken to eliminate any interviewer and reactive biases prior to the actual data collection and to identify and revise any questions participants did not understand.

Following the pilot interviews, permission to interview the athletes was obtained from the men's and women's varsity basketball coaches and Campus Recreation. Members of the University's co-ed recreational basketball league were then approached to participate in the study and a list of possible recreational participants was developed. Participants were randomly chosen from this list and from the male and female varsity basketball team rosters, contacted by the researcher, and an interview time and date was confirmed.

Prior to the interview, a cover letter (See Appendix C), a consent form (See Appendix D), and a demographic questionnaire was distributed to the participant to complete. At this time, the researchers' definition of pre, mid, end, and post-season was discussed and the participant's perception of the length of each time of the season was recorded. The interview was then conducted with the aid of a standardized interview schedule and large cue cards that helped the participant remember what time of the season was being discussed. In the interview, the participant was instructed to imagine an injury that would prevent him/her from participating in basketball for the period of one month. To ensure that participants had a standard criterion upon which to base their answers, this hypothetical injury scenario was used throughout the interview. The researcher did not provide participants with a specific injury to determine if participants' perceptions of injury severity and type of injury affected their appraisal of the hypothetical injury scenario. Interviews ranged in time from 30 to 60 minutes following which, the participant was debriefed (See Appendix E). Interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher and the 400 pages of transcribed data were analyzed by second researcher for accuracy.

## Data Analysis

All of the transcribed interviews were imported into the QSR NUD\*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing) computer software package. NUD\*IST is a flexible qualitative data analysis program that is designed to help researchers store, explore, and browse documents thereby facilitating the organization of data into categories and sub-categories. Coding of data into these categories is done directly on the computer screen and can be inspected, modified, and manipulated as researchers identify patterns and themes emerging from the data (Johnston & Carroll 1998; Richards & Richards, 1991).

The use of computer programs has dramatically improved the efficiency and accuracy of qualitative research and has changed the negative perception traditionally associated with this form of data analysis. Richards and Richards (1992) acknowledge that there are a number of benefits associated with qualitative data analysis programs such as NUD\*IST. In contrast to the labour intensive manual methods of qualitative analysis, NUD\*IST allows the researcher to store text efficiently, to access documents easily, to quickly move back into documents to retrieve and browse contextual information, to manage extensive amounts of coding, and to revise and expand categories and sub-categories with relatively little effort. Furthermore, the authors maintain that the low status and poor reputation of qualitative research is enhanced as computer programs establish the rigorous techniques involved in qualitative data analysis.

Although NUD\*IST has made the tasks of the qualitative researcher easier and more efficient, it is important to note that it does so without sabotaging the traditional methods of qualitative data analysis (Richards & Richards, 1992). NUD\*IST was developed to support the building and testing of grounded theory (Richards & Richards, 1991). The computer program is

only a vehicle meant to assist the researcher in the handling and management of data. The researcher is ultimately responsible for the creation of categories and the identification of patterns that culminate into theory.

In the present study, data were coded by the researcher according to the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). First, the transcripts were examined in detail and text related to each time of the season (pre, mid, end, and post) was coded accordingly. The text to each corresponding time of the season was then scrutinized and common features were identified as each paragraph in the data was compared for similarities and differences. Once similarities in the data were discovered, the text was placed into categories and sub-categories as like concepts were grouped together. This step is known as “creating categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Further comparison and contrasting of the data led to the modification of some categories and the addition of new categories until the data no longer generated new information and theoretical saturation occurred (Glaser & Strauss).

Several steps were taken throughout the process of data analysis to establish credibility. Specialized written notes to the researcher called “memos” were kept from the beginning of the analysis until theoretical saturation was reached. Memos typically include directions for the researcher to carry out, questions regarding the data the researcher may have, leads for the researcher to follow up on, the researcher’s thoughts on categories and their properties, and his/her notions regarding the relationships between concepts. It is essential for the qualitative researcher to record memos throughout the process of data analysis because they help the researcher achieve higher levels of abstract thinking. Moreover, memos contain the patterns and themes that become the basis of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The second technique used to establish credibility was peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is a process in which a second researcher familiar with the area and methodology provides the primary researcher with feedback on coding, categories, and theories that are developed. The second researcher acts as a “devil’s advocate” by asking probing questions to clarify the primary researcher’s interpretations and challenging any biases the primary researcher may have (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, participants were contacted when necessary to ensure the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation. This technique is known as member checking. Member checks allow the researcher to ascertain how the participant intended his/her information to be perceived and provide the participant with the opportunity to correct errors or wrong interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Results/Discussion**

**Results indicated that in each season athletes' emotional reaction to the onset of sport injury differs according to the variables that are appraised. Eleven general categories related to athletes' appraisal of the timing of injury onset in the sport season emerged from the analysis of the data. Variables including: importance of the season, length of season, time remaining in year, injury status, circumstances of injury, athlete status, success, team involvement, goals, social influences, and external considerations, were found to influence athletes' appraisals and in turn, affect their emotional reaction and/or behaviour. These variables are illustrated in Table 1:**

**Table 1**  
**Variables appraised in each time of the season.**

Category	Time of Season	
Importance of Season Length of Season Time Remaining in Year Injury Status Circumstances of Injury Athlete Status Success Team Involvement Goals Social Influences External Considerations	<b>Pre-Season</b>	
Importance of Season Length of Season Time Remaining in Year Injury Status Circumstances of Injury Athlete Status Success Team Involvement Goals Social Influences External Considerations	<b>Mid-Season</b>	<b>INJURY</b>
Importance of Season Length of Season Time Remaining in Year Injury Status Circumstances of Injury Athlete Status Success Team Involvement Goals Social Influences	<b>End-Season</b>	
Importance of Season Length of Season Time Remaining in Year Injury Status Circumstances of Injury Athlete Status Success Team Involvement Goals Social Influences External Considerations	<b>Post-Season</b>	

It is important to note, that these variables were not always considered at each time of the season and if variables were repeated throughout the four seasons, distinct differences in the appraisal of the variables was established from one season to the next.

### Importance of Season

Athletes reported a variety of reasons why each season was an important time to remain uninjured including the following:

#### Start of Season

**Pre-season** is a highly anticipated time because it is the beginning of a new year and athletes are very excited to start playing again. If an athlete is injured, he/she may be frustrated and disappointed because he/she is unable to participate in such an eventful point in the year. The intensity of emotion felt by the athlete, however, depends on the athlete's injury status and the extent of his/her injury. The following quotations illustrate how some athletes feel if they are unable to participate when the season begins:

...you're getting excited for the season starting up and your expectations are high and you're excited to be with your teammates and see what the team has to offer this year. So, I'd say that there's an emotional side that if you do get injured in the pre-season, it would carry over to your attitude to the season actually starting.  
(Jack, 23, varsity player)

#### Tryouts

Many athletes view **pre-season** as important because tryouts occur at this time. If an athlete is injured in pre-season and doesn't believe that he/she has a secure spot on the team, the athlete will be more concerned than an athlete who feels confident that he/she will make the team despite his/her injury. In this example, the athlete speaks about feeling cheated because if he was injured in the pre-season, he would miss the opportunity to become a member of the team:

...if I was trying to make the team, I'd be very concerned... I don't know what you could do if you had sprained your ankle and you couldn't play during the tryouts. I'm sure coach would give a later tryout date or let you come to a couple of practices just to see if you're any good but that would probably have a bigger emotional effect on somebody if they were actually trying very hard to make the team. I'd feel very cheated...If you'd gotten through a week of tryouts and you think you're doing that good, you're trying really hard and then you sprain your ankle and coach doesn't really recognize that because he doesn't know you, you're coming out to try and play and you spend the whole time out with [the athletic trainer], you'd feel cheated because you tried very hard to make that team and it turns out you won't make it. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

For this reason, an athlete who is hurt in pre-season may attempt to play through the injury to show the coach that he/she deserves to be a member of the team. Many athletes including the one cited here, noted that depending on the severity and extent of the injury, they would participate in tryouts despite their injury:

...in the pre-season, you're getting prepped and you're going to tryouts. Again, if I sprained my ankle, I would be concerned...so, I guess, if the situation were to arise, you kind of muster the pain, just fight the pain, hold the pain in while you can, if it's really bad. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

### Improve Status

Although some athletes may feel confident about making the team, **pre-season** remains an important time for many athletes to establish their role on the team. Therefore, if an athlete is injured at this time, he/she may not be able to improve his/her status on the team in terms of position and playing time. Many athletes discussed the importance of playing during pre-season to secure a leadership role on the team, to show the coach that they deserve to be a starter, and to gain more minutes in games:

Or even if you're a captain too. I think it affects things specifically at the beginning because when you're captain, you're trying to develop your leadership style and you're trying to get people on the same page...if you miss that first little bit, that part when the team comes together and bonds together, I think that it's difficult to

sort of jump in and say, 'hey, listen to me but oh, I missed the first bit'...the pre-season's important too, to sort of establish your role on the team and figure out where you fit in and to try to squeeze yourself in after that, it's a little more difficult... it's sort of an establishing point. I think it's an important point of the season. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

...last year, I was a freshman, I maybe got like five minutes a game, my whole goal was to prove that I deserve the minutes that I should get and if I get injured, it could affect my play. (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

**Mid-season** also allows non-starters to show the coach that they deserve more playing time and/or a starting position. If a non-starter is injured he/she may feel hurt, bad, discouraged, really frustrated, upset, and distraught because he/she will not get the opportunity to do this. Starters, on the other hand, may feel a little more confident that they will still have their position after the injury is healed. In this situation, the starter would feel less concerned about the injury. For instance:

Definitely, as a non-starter, that might be your time to prove yourself and get the time on the floor and so, that might be the most important part of the season for you and if you can't play in it, it's gonna make it a lot harder to deal with it or maybe it'll force you to work harder, depending on the person. As a starter, I think it would probably be for the best because a starter would know the mid-season is just for getting warmed up and as long as they're back for the regular season it would be okay. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

The starter's lack of concern, of course, depends on his/her appraisal of the injury situation. Starters may feel just as negative about their injury in mid-season because roles are still not defined at this time and if the starter's replacement demonstrates that he/she is capable of playing the starter's position, the starter may lose his/her spot on the bench. As these athletes explained:

...that's even more so, a chance where you're trying to push for a position because during end-season and post-season, positions are pretty much set but with mid-season, you're still kind of trying to figure out who plays with who and where the chemistry lies. So, that'd be really frustrating just at that time of year because the positions aren't set...I think it's just as frustrating [for a starter] because that gives one of the younger guys or one of the bench guys a chance to come up and play and if they out perform you, well, then your starting spot has just moved to the

bench at a time when it's almost crucial . (Terry, 22, varsity player)

Starters who become injured in mid-season also risk losing their leadership position because they can not be on the court to help the team:

...if you're in a leadership position then you'd feel like you couldn't have the same influence on the team if you weren't contributing the same so you could lose that position on the team, someone else could always take it that is playing which would hurt. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

### Team Cohesion

Athletes used descriptive terms such as frustrating, upset, emotionally hard, and terrible to explain how they would feel if they were injured in **pre-season** and were unable to experience the first stages of team cohesion. It is important for athletes to be able to play during the pre-season because this is the time in which the team begins to become a cohesive unit on an emotional and physical level. Not only does the injured athlete miss the chance to become comfortable with his/her teammates style of play, he/she also loses the opportunity to form close personal relationships with his/her teammates. These quotations reveal the importance of pre-season to the development of team cohesion:

I think that it's very important. I think that's when you get to learn and you get to meet your players, you get to make a connection with all your players and your coach and you get to know where everybody plays and if you get injured, obviously that's gonna be broken. The bond's not gonna be as strong as if you were a hundred percent healthy or you weren't injured, sitting off on the side...being hurt in the pre-season you still would go to practices but it wouldn't be the same as being involved with them and passing the ball around with each other... (Vikki, recreational player)

I think the character building of the team and getting people used to one another, used to playing with each other on a personal level and just on a playing style level, especially sports where people play very differently...that gelling period is very important. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Some athletes may even feel like they let their team down because they were injured and were unable to help the team become a cohesive unit. Starters who have a leadership role on the team, for instance, may feel that their inability to play may cause the team to fall apart because the other players won't believe that they will be able to have a successful season without the starter.

One athlete explained how a starter's injury can affect team cohesion in the pre-season:

I guess if you were a starter and you got injured, people look to you for leadership and so if you get injured and you get down on yourself, everyone else is going to see that as the example and then everybody else is going to get down on themselves and think 'well, it's going to be a terrible season'... (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

The bond between players on and off the court becomes even stronger in **mid-season**. If an athlete is in therapy because he/she is injured he/she will miss out on the social aspect of developing personal relationships with his/her teammates. The athlete will also be prevented from becoming comfortable playing with his/her teammates in game situations. Many athletes noted that the inability to experience team cohesion would be discouraging, frustrating, really upsetting, devastating, annoying, and emotionally hard:

...I think another part of being injured is the stuff that goes on off the floor, like the inside jokes you miss because you're doing therapy and the social things that make a team, a team and that's hard, to go into the change room and to hear the jokes and you laugh because everyone's laughing and you're glad that everyone's having a good time but you really have no idea what's going on and you can't really be a part of it. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

I always think that I feel that I miss out when I'm injured because you're on the sideline and people are getting experience playing together at this point and that's what the point of the mid-season is, to get used to playing with one another. So, you'd be missing out on valuable experience to get to know your other teammates on the court. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

### Physical Training

Physical training is a major aspect of the **pre-season**. If an athlete is injured at this time,

he/she may not feel that he/she will be able to regain his/her physical strength and conditioning before the team begins playing games in the mid-season. Athletes who realize that pre-season is important in terms of physical training will be upset if they are injured at this time. As two athletes explained:

I've had various coaches being here and I've been lucky enough to be with coaches that have impressed on me how important the pre-season is to get into shape for the rest of the year whereas, I don't think a lot of the people on my team that have been here the last few years understand how important it is to get into shape and to work hard during that time. So...somebody who doesn't realize that it's really, really important they would probably think that they're missing out on nothing, it's not games, it's just practising, it's just training and it's probably not a big deal. Whereas, I do realize the value of the pre-season and there's gonna be a huge gap that you've got to make up that you're missing out on but not everybody knows that. To me, it's definitely something that's important. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

I think that some people take pre-season a lot more seriously than other people and I think that if you are one of those people that thinks that this is the most important time of the year to get into shape and ready for the year and then you got injured, you'd be very upset. I think that a lot of athletes think that the pre-season is a very important time...it's true if you value the pre-season more than the other parts of the year then your emotions will be stronger whereas if you've never played before or if you don't really take it that seriously then it will be no big deal to you... (Julie, 20, varsity player)

Athletes continue training throughout the **mid-season** to prepare for end and post-season.

If an athlete is injured at this time, he/she may be frustrated and disappointed because he/she is not only losing the physical conditioning from pre-season, he/she is also missing the opportunity to become a stronger player by playing in games and continuing his/her training regimen. These quotations explain the importance of mid-season in terms of physical training:

...getting hurt in the mid-season is bad because you're missing games and it's also training for the end-season. So, yes, it would reflect on my feelings about my injury. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...the mid-season, I think you'd be more set back because you've worked all the way

to get to that one point and then you have to take all of that time off so, all of that working before that seems like wasted time and then you're going to have to put that same amount of time in after the injury just to get back to where you were so you're wasting almost twice as much time where you could have been improving your game, getting to a higher level... (Ted, 20, varsity player)

### Skill Training

**Pre-season** is also a time for athletes to become better players by improving their skills and learning new plays. Therefore, athletes who become injured at this time may be upset because they will miss the initial stages of skill training:

I would be upset because when I was in highschool, basketball was my life. So, to me it would have been a big deal to know that I was gonna miss the whole [season]. I'd almost feel like when I came into it, I wouldn't be ready. I wouldn't be emotionally there by any stretch, I wouldn't be physically there, that's the time you need to develop team cohesion, learn all your plays and just get yourself in the mode of playing basketball and being in shape enough to play a whole game. So, that's why it would be upsetting because I would know that my season wouldn't be complete...in terms of my development as a basketball player. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

"[in] pre-season, there's a lot of growing for players, you got to get all your plays down...". (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

### Final Year

An athlete who is in his/her final year of eligibility may respond more negatively to an injury in **pre-season** because this is his/her final opportunity to play at a competitive level of basketball and depending on his/her injury status, he/she may not be able to be a part of the team if the injury is career-ending. A career-ending injury in pre-season puts the athlete out of sport for the longest possible amount of time and due to the fact that the season has yet to get underway, the athlete has no idea what he/she could have contributed to the team. This athlete noted how much harder it would be for a player who is in his/her final year to be injured in the pre-season:

If you were in your last year...and you've worked the last few years towards this and you've become a better player and you know what's going on and you're a leader on the team and you just want your last year to be the best year ever and you want to perform your best because you know you're not going to have the opportunity to be competing again at this level probably ever again and so, [an injury in pre-season is] a huge emotional deal to you. If you're prepared for it to come around when the last game comes around and you can sort of be prepared for it but if it just ends like that without you being aware of it, I think it'd be really hard...[To be injured in the pre-season] it would be way harder than the end, I suppose because you would have to watch your team go through the year and you would have no idea where you could have fit into that team, what you could have done, what difference if any, there would be in the outcome of the games if you had of actually been able to participate. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

In **mid-season**, however, the player may look at the situation more positively because he/she knows that he/she can still come back and contribute to the team. Still, an injury in mid-season may mean that the player will have to miss more games than at any other time. This is frustrating for an athlete who is in his/her final year and does not have many games left to play.

One athlete described the appraisal of this situation:

I think it would have been worse if it was in the middle cause' I'd feel like I would miss a lot more games but it may have been, well, I don't know if it would have been easier but maybe less disappointed and at the beginning, maybe...it's frustrating so, it might psychologically make you be a bit off but emotionally it'd be better, I think, just because you know that you've got so much more to look forward to and you can get better and get back into it. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

This appraisal is much different if the athlete incurs an injury in the **end-season** because if it is the injured athlete's final year of playing, the injury becomes career-ending. If the team doesn't perform well he/she will not be able to play any more games even if he/she is able to recover quickly. The team needs to qualify for post-season play to extend the year and in turn, the athlete's window of time to recover from the injury and return to sport. As one participant explained, the athlete may not be mentally prepared for his/her season to end like this which makes it very difficult

emotionally:

I was injured at the end of the end-season...and that was really hard because it was my last year so I missed my last game. So, I wasn't mentally prepared for my basketball career to end which was really difficult emotionally... (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

Similarly, an injury in **post-season** will be a career-ending injury if it is the last year the athlete is able to play basketball because if the team loses one game they are no longer eligible to participate in the playoffs. The post-season therefore, is a very important time of year because the games determine which teams will fulfill the ultimate goal of playing in the final championship game. It is essential that veteran athletes in their last year of eligibility are able to participate because it is their final opportunity to win a championship. Consequently, if a veteran athlete is injured playing basketball, he/she may be disappointed and upset because the injury becomes career-ending and the athlete is unable to end of his/her career the way he/she may have wanted to by winning a title. The athlete may even feel like he/she let down the team because he/she was unable to play:

Playoffs, probably be the worst because if it's like your last season in highschool, your last season ever, you want to do well...the feeling of not finishing the way you wanted to, going out with an injury is not something you really want to end with. Yeah, the injury in the post-season playoffs...letting everyone down, disappointment, very upset by it. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

### Playing Games

In **mid-season**, the team begins to play exhibition games. Athletes used words like upsetting, disappointing, horrible, and down to describe how they would feel if they were unable to participate in the games that had been preparing for the entire pre-season. This is illustrated in the following quotations:

"It would be more upsetting than the pre-season because you're playing now and it's all about playing so, as soon as you can't do that then it's going to be more upsetting". (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

I know the pre-season's all great, the whole team cohesion thing but then you do want to play games. So, I think that would be the most frustrating part of being injured in the mid-season [is] not being able to actually do what you've been working up to. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

### Travelling

In **mid-season**, intercollegiate teams begin to travel to play games. If a player is injured he/she may not be able to join his teammates because it is too expensive to pay the travel expenses of the whole team. This is disappointing and upsetting to athletes who are injured because travelling at this time is centred upon having fun and bonding as a team. The games aren't perceived as important as later on in the year and therefore the athletes who are travelling are less focused on playing basketball and winning:

...we go all over the place and going to different places that you've never been before, that's a good experience and also travelling with the team, it's a good comradery sort of thing and if you're injured you might not go on those trips...So you'd be upset because you couldn't participate like regular team members. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

...this has nothing to do with basketball. When we go to Brandon compared to when we go to Minneapolis because Brandon, we're going to Brandon in the middle of nowhere in [Manitoba] but [when] we go to Minneapolis, we're going to the Mall of the Americas, we're doing all this fun stuff. There's a big difference and they're both in the [mid]-season. You want to be going and not for the basketball like when we're going down to Minneapolis, we couldn't care less and actually, we got in trouble for that because we lost both those games by 30 because honestly we weren't really there for the basketball. We went to the mall we spent all day there. We went downtown, we saw where the Vikings play. We were pretty much like sight seeing tourists not basketball players but if we were going to Brandon, there's nothing there we're just going to play basketball. In the mid-season [the place that we're going is more important]. In the end-season, it doesn't matter where you're going you want to win the game. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

### Team's Record

As the varsity teams begin to play games in the **mid-season**, a record is established which will ultimately help determine the team's ranking in post-season play. Therefore, if an athlete who contributes a lot to the team is injured at this time, he/she may feel negatively about the injury because the team may begin to perform badly and it's record may be affected. Athletes believed that they would experience feelings such as frustration, worry, disappointment, and stress if they were injured at this time and felt that the team's record was threatened. However, the team's record may not be an issue for some athletes. An athlete on the varsity team explained that his team doesn't play Canadian teams during exhibition play and therefore does not establish a record in this time period. For this reason, he wouldn't experience the same negative emotions as an athlete who is worried about his/her team's ranking. The following examples demonstrate how athletes' appraisal of the team's record influences their emotional reaction to the injury:

Frustrating is always one of them. Worried. Probably not as worried as the end-season but you'd still be a little bit worried because obviously if the games start slipping away, your record goes down and you don't get a better playing position in the playoffs. So, worried, frustrated, disappointed. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

That also goes for what I was saying before about the ranking. If I was out for a month and we were losing games and losing our rank that would really suck and you would really want to come back but our exhibition isn't the same and it's just games. We play 20 some odd games and our goal for the season starts from our first conference game to our last conference game and our goal is to win as many of those and then get to the playoffs. So, if I'm injured in the mid-season I don't think it affects my goals at all as long as I'm back by the beginning of the season. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

It is essential that the team wins as many games as possible in the **end-season** as well because winning will improve the team's record. The team needs a good record to be seeded in a good position in post-season and if an athlete is injured, his/her inability to play may jeopardize the

**team's ability to succeed:**

**Depending on the record, the team is placed against which other team. So, getting injured in the end-season and maybe losing a few games really might affect the outcome of the playoffs. (Barry, 25, recreational player)**

**"You'd want to be out there because you want to set yourself in the right position so, you're not playing all the top teams right away...". (Ted, 20, varsity player)**

### **Strategic Implications**

**The exhibition games in mid-season give the team an opportunity to see it's strengths and weaknesses, test out strategies, and learn what match-ups are most effective. If a player is injured, he/she won't get the chance to play in a game situation and learn what will or will not help the team later in the season. Respondents said that it would be a big let down and they would feel horrible if they were unable to master tactics that will prepare them for the upcoming seasons:**

**Horribly because since we're playing games now, it's a different ball game because even though these aren't the playoff games, this dictates or it'll tell you how well you're doing with your team and if you're out and you plan to be in your end or the post or your injuries recover by that time, your team hasn't had the chance to play with you in that way, they don't know your strengths or your weaknesses so, it would be a big let down for me and I'd imagine for the team also. (Doug, 24, recreational player)**

**I guess if I got injured in the mid-season, it'd be a downer because you get injured and in the exhibition games you get to learn your opponents like who you're gonna to play, just get the feel of the game type situation. (Brad, 22, recreational player)**

### **Qualify for Playoffs**

**In end-season, the games become very important because they determine whether or not the team will qualify for post-season play. If the team isn't guaranteed a spot in the post-season and the athlete becomes injured, he/she may feel very negatively (really bad, disappointed, angry, and frustrated) about the injury because his/her absence from the game may jeopardize the team's**

ability to move on into the post-season. Comments on the importance of end-season games included the following:

...the whole season is pretty much about making the playoffs and end-season is when it comes down to crunch time and a single game could decide it. So, the end-season is really important. That's when you have to step it up a bit, go a little bit higher. If you made the playoffs then it's a goal accomplished. So, the end-season is a step towards, probably, the main goal of the whole season which, is just to make the playoffs. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

The end-season is always important because you're obviously gonna be at the end of the season soon and that means it's finished...and if you're having a bad season and you know you're not going to make the playoffs then that's it. I mean, if you're injured, that's it. You're not going to get another chance... (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Athletes who are injured in end-season, therefore, may be more likely to rush rehabilitation and return to sport before they are really ready to because the games are so crucial at this time:

...that's kind of crucial, make it or break it, if we don't perform at this time then that's it, that'll be the end of your season. How does that affect your injury? Again, I think that the, like, the urgency of recovering has kind of taken another step from the last, mid-season... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

### Establish Reputation

The **end-season** is also an important time because it gives the player an opportunity to perform well and improve his/her own/team reputation. If he/she is injured he/she may not be able to do this. As this participant explained:

"...I'm trying to make a name for myself and [a name for this] University just so we can get respect around the league and I'm not going to get that respect if I'm out for the whole season and we lose again... (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

### Playoff Games

A great deal of anticipation surrounds **post-season** games because these are the games that the whole team has been working to play in all year. Two athletes stated that not being able to

participate in post-season play would be tough:

**I think that would be awful because even though I say that I'm there for fun, there's so much of a build up especially if your team is doing well and you make it to the playoffs, you don't want to miss a playoff game so I think that would be horrible. I'd be really upset. (Claire, 23, recreational player)**

**...we've worked for a whole season getting into the playoffs and if you're in the playoffs then you've obviously worked really hard and getting injured in the post-season, kind of makes you think it might go down all the drain if you don't make it to the title. So, it's really, really bad because everything you've worked for in the season is in jeopardy. (Barry, 25, recreational player)**

Furthermore, many participants said that they would feel let down, disappointed, devastated, stressed, and useless if they were injured and were prevented from playing at such an important time. The playoffs are the most intense time of year because the team must win it's games to avoid being knocked out of the quest for the championship title. For this reason, many athletes want to be able to contribute to the team's success and if they are injured in the post-season they may not have the chance to help out the team. If the injured athlete is an influential player he/she may feel like he/she let the team down because if he/she doesn't play the team's ability to succeed may be affected. To quote:

**...I want to say devastated but it's just from the terms of being an athlete, I wouldn't know what to do just because that's the funest time of the year to play and that's the most intense time of year to play. So, I think devastated is a good word. (Terry, 22, varsity player)**

**...I guess injury would be more stressful or important if it was towards the post-season because the games become more important, the playoffs and everybody wants to win. So, if you're a key player on the team and you get injured, it's a let down to everyone else, you feel useless. I know that happened to me before. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)**

### **Long-term Goal**

The entire year the team's ultimate long-term goal is to win the championship game and if

an athlete is injured in the **post-season** when the team is so close to actualizing that goal, the athlete will feel helplessness, disappointed, frustrated, let down, and upset because he/she will be unable to help the team fulfill the goal. One athlete explained:

"...that's the end, the goal...you work the whole season for this goal and then you can't help your team fulfill the goal and it would just be totally frustrating".  
(Colleen, 22, varsity player)

As a result, the injured athlete may try to play through the injury if he/she can. The post-season is too important to miss according to this participant:

You work all that end-season to get to this point and to be injured now, pointless. You'd feel like it was pointless to go through the whole thing and not play now and I think that this is the time where people do dumb things and they play anyway...  
(Fred, 22, varsity player)

Although there are a number of different reasons why athletes view each time of the season as an important time of the year to be playing basketball, athletes may not respond as negatively to the injury experience if they perceive the season as less important. In end and post-season the games are always important as winning becomes paramount, however, in pre-season athletes may not be concerned about an injury due to their experience and the fact that games have yet to start. In the same respect, mid-season may be seen as less important by participants because the games are relatively unimportant.

### No Games

Some athletes reported that they would be less frustrated about an injury in **pre-season** because the team has not started playing games. As these athletes explained:

I wouldn't be too frustrated. If it was in the pre-season, it wouldn't be too bad because I could still sort of rehabilitate my ankle and I know there aren't any games I'll be missing in the pre-season anyway and so, the level of frustration there isn't too bad. As long as I could rehabilitate it to the point where I'm well enough to play

for the exhibition games. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

"...I don't think it's quite as crushing as it is at other times of the year. You're not missing any games which is, you know, what you're training for and what you've worked for". (Abby, 22, varsity player)

### Experience

If the athlete is an experienced player and he/she becomes injured in **pre-season**, he/she may not be as concerned about the injury because he/she knows the plays and has the skill and talent to jump right back into the game when his/her injury has healed. These players are confident that they will make the team and will be able to perform as well as the other players when they return because they have such a strong background in the sport:

I'd be relieved that I didn't have to be put through the vigorous stuff before we get into the games. I probably wouldn't even be missing like if I was injured I could just sit there because in the pre-season it's when they go through plays and that stuff and it's the same thing every year so I know it already...if I knew I was going to be a starter, at this time, there's no difference. If I come into camp knowing I'm going to be on the team and I know I'm going to be a starter...right now I'm not too concerned with making the team. I pretty much have the spot but if I was trying to make the team, I'd be very concerned... (Fred, 22, varsity player)

### Unimportant Games

**Mid-season** games are viewed as relatively unimportant compared to those in the later seasons because the games don't count towards the team making the playoffs or not. For this reason, an athlete who is injured at this time might not be as concerned about the injury and may take the time necessary to rehabilitate properly. The following quotations illustrate this appraisal:

I wouldn't be too concerned because it doesn't count. That's the main thing. If you had to miss some games it's disappointing because I want to play basketball and it's kinda frustrating just sitting on the side and just watching people play then you really want to play and then of course, it's not as frustrating when you're at practise and people are running and you get to sit out but I wouldn't be too concerned mainly because it doesn't count. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

Similar to the pre-season, frustrated but since it's exhibition, since it's not conference, it doesn't count for playoffs, still take the time to rehabilitate it and make sure I'm ready to go, to start playing. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

### Length of Season

Athletes also consider the length of the season in their appraisal of the injury situation. The perception of how long each season is varies. For instance, athletes who feel that **pre-season** is approximately a month long react negatively to a one month injury because the injury would force them to stay off the court for the duration of the season. These athletes are concerned that they would not be physically ready to return for the mid-season because they have not had the opportunity to train during the pre-season. This appraisal is likely to upset and frustrate the athlete:

If it was just me only being out for a month. Well, only! when you're playing high school basketball, a month is a good portion of your experience but how would I perceive? I would be upset because when I played basketball or when I was in highschool, basketball was my life. So, to me it would have been a big deal to know that I was gonna miss the whole, I'd almost feel like when I came into it, I wouldn't be ready. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

"If you had to miss a week it might not be so bad, if you had to miss a month then you're getting out of pre-season first of all so, it would be frustrating". (Peter, 26, recreational player)

Other athletes believe that depending on the status of the injury, pre-season is a good time to get injured because it is long and they will have time to recover before the start of the next season and may not miss much of the pre-season itself. This appraisal did not lead to a negative emotional reaction. Athletes who felt pre-season was long enough to allow them to return to sport said that the injury wouldn't affect them as much because it wasn't a big deal:

...in the pre-season if I were to get injured, it would make the pre-season kind of important if I got injured because that's my chance to get in before the actual season starts, like it's your second chance because it's still the pre-season so, you're just like 'okay, well, if I get injured, I won't miss that much, I can get back into it before the

pre-season's over'. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Similar to pre-season, many athletes thought that **mid-season** was relatively long. These athletes were more positive about the injury situation because they felt that they could recover and come back before the start of the next season. As this athlete explained:

...if you get injured in the mid-season, you're out for a month, you have enough time to come back for league games and you might not be up to snuff but I think you can work yourself back into it. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

One reason varsity athletes believe that they have a great deal of time to recover before the next season is the break period between mid and end-season:

One of the things for us, with the end-season is that we have Christmas break during at the end of December so, that falls in the middle of our end season just because our schedule all changed this year but so, if you get injured before the Christmas break, you've got time to recover... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

... near to the end of mid-season when it's starting to get a grind and you're looking forward to the break if I got hurt and I knew I had time to recover before end-season started then I'd have a positive outlook just because I don't care, I'd have time to let one injury heal but I also have time to let, all the nagging injuries that are always there heal. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

Of course, the length of time the athlete is required to stay off the court is contingent upon the athlete's injury status. If the athlete perceives that he/she will not have enough time in the mid-season to recover, he/she will respond more negatively because the team plays the majority of their games at this time of the year and if the athlete is injured for the entire mid-season, he/she will miss the most games he/she could possibly miss. The following quotations illustrate this point:

...if it was something really bad I know how long exhibition is and if I sprained my ankle I'd know that I would be out 5 games or something like that. If I break my arm I know I'm going to be out 20 games or something like that and so, the more games you miss, the more frustrated you're going to get. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

...missing the games from the time that you got hurt to the time that you could

possibly come back and that's the longest possible time you could be out and not playing which, is really the worst part about being injured, the most emotionally frustrating part, not being able to play and watching and thinking maybe you could and standing up and realizing that there's no way that you could. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

These negative feelings may also surface if the athlete perceives that mid-season is relatively short because he/she will feel a sense of urgency to return before end-season:

Our mid-season is fairly short, it ends up being maybe six games or so. So, it's, the regular season is just around the corner and I think, you'd probably feel a sense of urgency to return...you want to recover as quickly as you can and I think, an injury in the pre-season, a major injury when you're out for a month can probably set the tone for your season because missing out on those pre-season games can be so important and from there the rest of the season flies. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

If an athlete is injured in **end-season**, however, he/she may have no hope of returning in time to make a contribution to the team. End-season is perceived as a fairly short season and depending on the severity of the injury, many athletes felt that they would have to sit on the bench until the beginning of the post-season:

...end-season, obviously, is a little bit more significant than exhibition games in the beginning of season and end-season, you don't have time to recuperate and get back to a hundred percent. So, I'd say time, it'd be a pretty hefty factor in that, in actually getting recuperated and feeling better. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

...so much happens all at once in the end-season, everything's going so quickly that missing a week or two is missing a long time and I think that a minor injury, to put into perspective compared to the mid-season, a minor injury at this time is a lot more of a blow than it is in the mid-season. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

I think it would be the biggest because if it was one where you're out for a month your whole season would be done and you'd be the most mad because then you can't do nothing about your team anymore. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

Athletes have even less time to recuperate in **post-season**. The length of the season depends on the team's success. It can be over in one game if the team loses or it can extend one or

two weeks if the team is successful and advances to the final championship game. Athletes used words like devastated, worse, very angry, upset, really tough, really hard, let down, and left out to describe how they would feel if they didn't have enough time to get back into the game:

"...if you know that's it, you're gonna feel worse I think than if you know there's a chance that you're gonna at least be involved somehow in that situation". (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

"That'd be really tough because when you're in the post-season, that's basically do or die part of your season and there's no recovering, there's no time. So, I think that'd be really, really hard especially, if you are a key contributor to the team. You'd feel all those feelings of letting people down and personal emotions. I think that would be the worst probably the worst time to be injured, to get injured and just psychologically, you wouldn't be prepared for that". (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

#### Time Remaining in Year

When athletes encounter an injury at any time of the year, the amount of time remaining in the year is considered in their appraisal of the injury situation. An injury in **pre-season**, for example, is viewed more positively because the athlete is looking forward to the whole season that lies ahead. The athlete knows that he/she can participate and contribute to the remaining three seasons:

"I guess, just what I said about the pre-season because you can look forward to the rest of the year...". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

...I would hope I'm up to a hundred percent when the games start but if I'm not, I know I'll soon be there enough as to contribute to the team for the rest of the season. If I miss a couple games, in the exhibition games then it's still okay as long as I know that I can contribute to the team in a larger way for the rest of the season. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

For this reason, an injury in pre-season may motivate recovery because the athlete is looking forward to the rest of the year ahead and he/she has a lot of time remaining in the year to

meet his/her goals:

...frustrating because you'd feel like you lost a lot of what you did over the summer but it would be very motivational because there's so much more to come. So, you might tend to work harder to get back. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

"...I would probably feel really angry and disappointed [if my goals were affected] but try and get yourself to work on them later or the next season. Don't give up". (Beth, 22, recreational player)

In **mid-season**, athletes may feel more negatively about their injury than in pre-season because the team is playing games. Still, the intensity of these feelings is less than those felt in the later seasons because the athlete can look forward to the end and post-season to improve their goals when the games are more important. These participants described how they would feel:

Still, frustrated but more calm because the season's going, just get the injury behind me and then start going again to make sure I'm fully healthy for end-season and playoffs. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

I think that's a pretty big set back as far as your performance for the rest of the season goes but at the same time, they're only exhibition games and they don't really matter but I think, in the back of your head, you're always looking forward to the next game that does matter. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

...if you still have time, after the half way point, you still have the chance to do the same things, I feel, as a team. Personal goals, I think it would be like the pre-season, I'd want to get back to the point before the injury and otherwise I would have wanted improve more but I think that I would still see that chance to improve just as much, to have a strong second half of the season. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Again, with time remaining in the year the athlete may be motivated to recover quickly:

During mid-season, the reaction would be 'well if I get injured, I'm going to work hard to get back in because the end of the season is going to happen soon, the playoffs are coming soon so, I need to get back in there and get back into the swing of things'. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

In the **end-season**, however, the amount of time remaining in the year hinges on the team's performance. The team's success is crucial at this point because if they don't succeed and qualify

for playoffs the season is finished and there is no time for the injured athlete to return. This is an example of how an athlete would feel in this situation:

**Distraught, let down. I don't know anything that conveys heavy disappointment because that's the only time that's important...I'd say even more than the post-season because you're goal is to get to the post-season but you're not there yet and if you don't do good now, you're not going to get there. So, this is probably the most important time... (Fred, 22, varsity player)**

Similarly, the severity of injury is a variable considered when an athlete is injured in the end-season because if it is severe there is very little time remaining and the athlete will not be able to return even if the team made it to post-season:

**"Just mad, anger, knowing that you have to sit there and watch because if it's a severe injury, you're not gonna be back for any part of the rest of the season". (Beth, 22, recreational player)**

If the season is finished at this point, it may affect the athletes recovery. He/she may not be motivated to recover. Whereas, if there is time remaining in the season and the athlete believes that there is a possibility of playing again, he/she may be more motivated to recover quickly:

**...if it looks like it's gonna pretty much put an end of your season, that's about it, you've got post-season to go but you wouldn't be playing anyways then, 'yeah, who cares? I'm not gonna rush back to get back into things...'. I don't think it would be but it depends on the person, even if you're someone who's a non-starter then you maybe working so close to being a starter or so close to playing some more minutes or something then you could take it as a motivating factor and try to work your way back to the playoffs but at that point in time, it's almost said and done. (Abby, 22, varsity player)**

**The end-season is always important because you're obviously gonna be at the end of the season soon and that means it's finished and you always want to do as much as you can and if you're having a bad season and you know you're not going to make the playoffs then that's it. I mean, if you're injured, that's it, you're not going to get another chance but if you are gonna make the playoffs, it's obviously really, really important and you want to work hard and get back so you can be in shape for those playoffs. (Janet, 22, varsity player)**

The team's success is also essential in **post-season**. At this point, there is no more time remaining in the season to reach their goals. The team is finished for the year unless they can continue to win throughout the playoffs into the championship game. Many respondents used words such as terrible, worse, really hurts, and total let down to describe how they would feel if they were injured in post-season and didn't have time to recover and return to sport:

...as soon as you lose it's over in post-season. At least, that's how our's is set up so, in conference or in end-season or mid-season, you always live to play another day but in post-season, it's win or go home....if you're injured and can't play and because you can't play, the team loses then the season's over but if you're injured at any other time of year, you have time to recover and come back to help the team but at that time of year, an injury could mean the difference between winning the championship and losing the second round. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

...once you come up to that point you've accomplished everything, you don't get a second chance because the season's pretty much over. By the time you recover and are able to do sports again, whatever the goals you've set...whatever you've accomplished so far is what you're going to have to accept. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

The only hope the athlete may have to return is if his/her injury is really not that severe and the team wins long enough for the athlete to get back onto the court. Otherwise, the season is over. There is no more time remaining in the year for the athlete to look forward to. This quotation reveals the glimmer of hope an athlete may have in post-season:

A not so severe injury and there's still hope of returning to the season then I think that you're probably going to want to recover as quickly as you can because there's still hope that you could win a championship and again, if you're done for the season it's just a total let down. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

In post-season, the amount of time remaining in the year may affect recovery in one of two ways depending on the appraisal made by the athlete. If the athlete perceives that the season is finished, the athlete may not try to recover quickly to get back into the game because he/she has so

much time in the off-season to rehabilitate. In this case, the athlete may not be motivated to recover at all and it may take the athlete a long time to recover properly from the injury. However, the athlete may also view the situation as an opportunity to recover properly. If he/she knows that the year is over he/she may work hard in recovery and actually recover better because he/she has so much time in the off-season and doesn't have to rush back for the next part of the season:

...if it's severe you're not going to play again until, the next season. So, you're not gonna try and make yourself better right away. You're just going to prolong it more because you know you have a lot of time to do something about it. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

At this point, you know that the season's done so, if it was a serious injury, it's probably actually a good time for it to happen because then you have the whole summer to rehab for the next year... (Janet, 22, varsity player)

### Injury Status

#### Severity

Athletes acknowledged that the severity of the injury would affect how they would emotionally respond to the injury situation. The four degrees of severity mentioned in each time of the season were severe, not severe, season-ending, and re-occurring injuries.

Severe injury. Many athletes noted the influence that a severe injury would have on their emotions. It is important to note that the severity of the injury was self-perceived and therefore, did not remain constant across participants. The researcher only asked the participants to describe how they would feel at each time of the season if they were to incur a severe versus a not severe injury. The researcher intentionally did not establish the severity of the injury to avoid the possibility of severity becoming a confounding variable. The researcher did not want participants' appraisal of the hypothetical injury situation to be restricted to a pre-defined notion of severity.

Although participants acknowledged that they would experience negative emotions any time they were faced with a severe injury, their appraisal of a severe injury differed season to season. A wide variety of reasons why each time of the season was an inopportune time to have a severe injury were noted. In **pre-season**, for instance, athletes may feel disappointed, distraught, stressed, frustrated, discouraged, and furious about a severe injury because they were so excited to begin the season. To quote:

...pre-season, you're excited to finally get it going after off-season so, if you twist an ankle and you're out for two days, it's no big deal cause' you're still getting to play but if you did something more severe and you're out for two to three weeks then you're frustrated because you were excited about getting going and now you have to wait. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

If the injury is very severe some athletes may question if it is worth continuing on with the season because they fear that they may not be able to return for the rest of the season:

...if it was more severe, it would definitely effect because if you're just starting out and the injury's going to effect the rest of the season then that's something to consider, do you want to sit there through practises every day, go on the weekends watch the games when you can't be there? Pre-season, might be a time where some people consider dropping out. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Athletes may also feel that rehabilitating the injury isn't as important because it's pre-season and they don't have a short-term goal to motivate them to recover:

...it would be pretty discouraging because you don't have a game or a set goal to look forward to in the short term, you're just looking long term and it might be so far away that recovering from this injury might be lessened a bit, it might not seem quite as important to you at the time. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

"with something that's more severe, you can try to come back but you still might not be able to". (Beth, 22, recreational player)

In the **mid-season**, however, athletes want to recover from a severe injury so they can return to sport as quickly as possible because they don't want to miss out on playing games and the

longer they must sit out the more excited they are to begin. This in turn, reinforces negative emotions such as frustration, anger, disappointment, sadness, loss, and stress:

...if your injury is very bad then you're going to be much more emotionally upset and have a lot more things to deal with ... You have a lot more questions going on in your head, if you should continue or what you should be doing to fix it and once you start playing, you want the progress to move faster. You don't want to be out for longer. So, I think your emotional stress is going to be higher if your injury is worse. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

"The longer you're out for the more excited you'd be and it hurts more". (Peter, 26, recreational player)

Mid-season is also the time of the year devoted to shaping roles on the team and developing team cohesion. If the athlete has a severe injury he/she will not be able to participate in such activities. This may upset the athlete as well:

...a longer term injury, even though there's that initial team building and strategy building, throughout the season, the more games you play, the more a team is going to shape itself and I wouldn't want to miss out on that re-defining of the team and that re-defining of my role on the team. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Nonetheless, even if the injury is severe the possibility of quitting is not considered at this time of the year because the athlete has invested so much time into the sport already. One athlete explained:

...if it's severe, I would never consider quitting at this point. So, you know you'd have to stick it out, you'd have to be with that team regardless of whether you were going to play or not for the rest of the season. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

In **end-season**, injured athletes are still missing a lot of games because they are unable to play. These athletes are likely to feel frustrated, mad, devastated, and guilty because the team may need them to play in the games to be successful and without their contribution the team may not be able to qualify for post-season play. These quotations illustrate how emotional a severe injury

would be during the end-season:

"If I was missing almost all the games up to the playoffs then I'd be really, really mad, especially if the playoffs were in doubt". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

If I were to break my arm I don't know what I'd do. I've never been in that situation where I couldn't play and it would be beyond anything that I've ever experienced because I'm one of those people that eats, sleeps, plays basketball and if I can't play basketball especially during the time where I need to because that's only seven weeks out of the whole year that I need to be playing basketball and if I'm out for those seven weeks I don't even know, I'd be beyond words. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

If the injury is very severe it may become a season-ending injury if the athlete is unable to rehabilitate the injury before the end of the year. These athletes described the dilemma injured athletes face if there is little time remaining in the year:

If it's something more severe like an ACL tear or something then you're pretty much out and you end it off in a bad way [and] you don't get another chance. It's pretty much over. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

The most frustrating feeling to get would be the end-season if you got injured because if the injury's serious enough it could eliminate you from the post-season, when your team really needs you to be there. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

Athletes do have the hope of returning for the last season, however. Unless the team doesn't qualify for post-season play the athlete may be able to push his/her recovery time forward so that he/she can participate in the playoffs:

"At this point, you still might have enough time to recover and get back in time for either the playoffs or maybe the last couple games of the season". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

...just that hope of being able to play for the playoffs because the playoffs are so important...I think it would make you be more aware of your injury and just the hope to see progress is getting better. Whereas, I think, if you knew that there was no hope of coming back for the playoffs, you would just be 'okay, I'm injured' there'd be nothing to get better for. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Of course, even if the athlete is able to recover quickly he/she may not be at the same level physically because the injury was so severe. This may affect the athlete's ability to play at his/her full potential if the team does make the playoffs:

...a major injury at that point in time, realistically, it finishes your season because even if you're wanting to recover from the injury, by the time you get back into shape physically you're never going to get to the point that you were at or that you had to work up to. So, I think that's a pretty tough time to get injured at that point in the season. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

In **post-season**, it is virtually impossible for an athlete with a severe injury to return to sport before the end of the year. Even if the team is successful and makes it to the championship game, post-season only lasts a few weeks and the recovery time for a severe injury would be much longer. A severe injury is a season-ending injury in the post-season:

If it was a severe injury, knowing I might miss more games is a lot worse than missing one because say, I was injured for a week and we happened to win the first game I was injured and maybe the second game I was injured, it would hurt because you know you're definitely out for, if the severity of the injury keeps you out for the whole post-season then you know you're definitely out for the whole post-season and that really hurts and even if the injury wasn't as severe, you're still worried that you might get knocked out before you're able to come back and play. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

This is emotionally hard for athletes because they have worked so hard all season to get to this point. Playing in the post-season has been the major goal and the fact that they are unable to contribute to the team is a big let down. It may cause the team to lose. Many athletes said they would feel angry, upset, frustrated, and helpless if they couldn't participate in the post-season due to a severe injury:

...if it's really bad and you come back and you try play on it and there's no hope and you're just like 'oh, I can't do anything, I'm out' then you have that feeling of let down, you've worked so hard and so long to get to this point, to the playoffs, to prove that you're the champs and you're injured and you can't prove anymore and if

your team has relied on you to help prove then your team can't prove it either.  
(Brad, 22, recreational player)

Participation in the post-season is so important that some athletes would play even if they had sustained a severe injury. This athlete explains that the only way he wouldn't play is if he was forbidden by a medical professional:

...even if it was more severe you'd still continue to play through it in the post-season just because of what time of the year it is compared to before if you could push yourself to even play then you'd play. There'd be no setting back. You have to be told by your doctor that you can't play at that time of the year. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

Not severe injury. A minor injury in pre-season may not elicit as negative emotions compared to later in the year because the athlete feels that he/she will be able to participate in the **pre-season** once the injury is healed. This may motivate the athlete to recover faster:

"...if it was a minor injury then you would have hope to come back, you could be motivated to come back and play as soon as you could". (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

In addition, if the athlete doesn't view the pre-season as important then he/she will be less affected by the severity. For example:

In the pre-season, probably not. If I sprained my ankle and I was going to be out for two weeks, if I broke my foot and I had to recuperate for six weeks, at the beginning it doesn't matter, well, it matter's I guess but you're not going to be missing anything important. (Fred, 22, varsity athlete)

Other athletes, however, may view the pre-season as an important time to be participating. If they incur a minor injury they may be frustrated, upset, worried, and concerned because they may not be able to perform up to their ability in training camp:

...you go into camp and you're injured, I don't think you can go full out even if it's a minor injury. So, I think it'd be more frustrating just before training camp started than actually getting injured maybe, a little bit later in the season. If it's not that

severe of an injury you can always kind of play through it but emotionally you're always going to have it in the back of your mind so, you're kind of maybe be tenative when you're on the court and not give it a hundred percent just in fear of aggravating it and making it worse. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

These players may hide their injuries and play through them because they may be concerned about try-outs and/or contributing to the team. As this player notes:

...just playing through injuries, if you have high expectations of the season, you probably want to maybe, I found players try to hide their injuries or they try to do as much as they can to get over it just so they can get in there and attribute. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

Although a minor injury in **mid-season** would be disappointing because athletes would be unable to participate in games, many positive aspects of having a minor injury were cited at this time. For instance, it may be the best time to become injured because athletes have participated in the pre-season and can see themselves playing in the end and post-seasons:

...injury that wasn't severe the mid-season would be the best time to be injured because I was still able to participate in the pre-season and I can see myself playing towards the end of the mid-season or the end-season. To me, that's when everyone's getting to know each other and if I had pick one point to not so badly injured that's probably when it would be. (Claire, 23, recreational)

In addition, many athletes felt that they would not be as concerned about a minor injury in mid-season because they would not have to miss very much of the season. If they were unable to participate in a few games it would not be as bad as later on in the year when the games become more important:

...something that's going to keep me out a couple of weeks in the mid-season, I'd be very comfortable with and I know okay, I'll miss a few games, that's it. I'll come back and nothing too drastic has changed. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Again, if it's only a couple days then in the long term it doesn't really mean a lot because those games don't necessarily mean anything, they're just exhibition games, they're just sort of warm-up. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Sitting on the bench with a minor injury also allows the athlete to reassess his/her behaviour. This participant noted that a minor injury could be viewed positively:

...sometimes a minor injury is a really good thing to get you in check...it depends on the circumstances but if things aren't going well and you're really quite frustrated and sometimes the coaching style isn't really conducive to your personality and you start to get your back up and you may be not reacting maturely, in the way that you know that you probably should to your coach or I don't know, this an example but a minor injury to set you back might make you sit down and think about the way you've been reacting to what's going on and it might just put you in a better emotional state and you can sort of start fresh... (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

The only advantage of an injury in **end-season** is the possibility of returning before the season is over and being able to contribute to the team:

"...if it's a minor injury, you might be able to go through therapy and work through it so you can actually get back in there". (Jack, 23, varsity player)

...if it was a minor sprain it wouldn't matter I'd play, I wouldn't care I'd play anyways, I'd just tape it up and go out anyways and if I can't play as much so be it but at least I was contributing. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

Still, missing any number of games in end-season is perceived negatively because the games are very important and winning each game may be necessary to qualify for post-season play. The athlete may not have enough time to recover from the injury and make an impact on the court because the season is relatively short. Many athletes said they would be upset and disappointed if they could not contribute to the team:

...if it's a minor injury it's still a let down because it's coming down to the nitty-gritty and these games count, you can't screw around when it comes to the final games to make the playoffs. So, any small injury, big or small, it's gonna be a huge let down to the team, not if it's just me too, if any other member of my team is injured, it's a let down, that means we have another's shoes to fill....if the injury's to the point where you're out for a game then you're hurting yourself more than you're hurting the team, I think because you joined the team just because you love the sport and you think that you can contribute to the team now or the team players. Yeah, disappointing. Just disappointing. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

For these reasons, many athletes will choose to continue playing with a minor injury at this time or rush back to sport before they are ready:

I think that at that point in the season too, like, you put your injuries in perspective and little aches and pains that you might have taken some time off for in the mid-season, you'll play through those now and the games become so much more important. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

"...if it automatically happens right towards the end of the season, you've kind of gotta rush to try and get it at least into playing shape". (Jack, 23, varsity player)

Even if the athlete can play through his/her injury, he/she may still question his/her ability to perform up to standard and worry that this may affect the team's success:

...I'd still be upset. I'd be worried that my performance, like, when I came back my performance wasn't gonna be up to snuff and that might affect what's happening with our team. So, I would still, I'd still be fairly upset about the whole thing and just missing league games is bad news. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

The same fear surfaces in the **post-season**. While athletes acknowledged that recovery would be quick with a minor injury, they also noted that they would worry that the injury may prevent them from performing to their usual ability. This may compromise the athlete's position on the bench and/or amount of playing time he/she receives during the playoffs. The following quotations illustrate these thoughts:

A not so severe injury and there's still hope of returning to the season then you're probably going to want to recover as quickly as you can because there's still hope that you could win a championship... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

"If you were just specifically talking about the sport, regardless, you're not going to be able perform to the level that you want to perform". (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

Obviously, I think a post-season injury, it'd be exaggerated, if it was just something that kept you out, it would make you feel so much worse than if it had occurred early in the season. If it's earlier in the season, you can just shrug it off and say 'well, it's only this' but at the end of the season, if it affects your play in any way, it's going to be blown up because you want to be at your peak level. (Ted, 20,

varsity player)

I think depending on the length of the post-season, any injury could be pretty devastating. I might be more concerned about...something smaller during the post-season might compromise your playing time or position on the team. So, it might be more frustrating but at the same time, I still think that a more severe injury would definitely be worse. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Athletes may also be concerned that even a minor injury may prevent them from playing if the team is not successful. In the post-season, the team needs to win each game to move on in the playoffs. If the team loses, the injured athlete may not have the opportunity to heal and return to sport before the season is over:

"...even if the injury wasn't as severe, you're still worried that you might get knocked out before you're able to come back and play". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

As a result, many athletes would choose to play through a minor injury. These athletes explain that they would disregard their injury and the pain associated with it because this is the goal that the team has worked towards all year and therefore, winning is first and foremost:

"...it would probably be better to have it in the post-season because you'd be more likely to just forget about it, play through it cause' that's it". (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

"If it wasn't very severe, if it was the first game of the playoffs definitely just ice it up and away you go, suck up the pain". (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

In a way if I got injured in the post-season, if it was a sprained ankle, again, I think I'd be more tempted to play on it instead of rest it just because we're in the playoffs like, as a goal, you've reached your goal, you gotta complete... (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Season-ending injury. Athletes are likely to feel negatively about a season-ending injury at any time of the year, however, the overall consensus among athletes interviewed was that **pre-season** was the worst possible time to incur a season-ending injury because athletes are very

excited to start a new season. If they were to become injured at this point in the season they have not even had the opportunity to participate in the sport and would be forced miss the other three seasons. This is the longest period that an athlete who incurred a season-ending injury could miss. Athletes used words like frustrating, emotionally distraught, emotionally damaging, harder, negatively, bother, and let down to describe a season-ending injury in pre-season:

"I think that if it's a serious injury at any point other than the very, very end of the year, it would be bad because that's gonna put you out for all four of them". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Pre-season I think the big thing would be if it's a bad injury then you haven't even gotten to play any of the season and it's so frustrating because you were all worked up and all excited to play and then you hurt yourself and can't play. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Athletes noted that such an injury in pre-season would be hard to deal with and accept. If the injury even threatens to put the athlete out of sport for the whole sport season, it could have considerable consequences on behaviour. One athlete said the following:

I think the big thing is if you can foresee being better in time to get back into it then it's easier to recover than if it's something that you know is going to be threatening your whole season. I think it's the same as with anything in life like if you just got a little head cold as opposed to a really bad flu, it's easier to handle, you can see yourself getting better really quickly and you can deal with it a lot better. Whereas if you have a really bad cold, it's easier for you to get down in the dumps about it because you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Athletes would also experience negative emotions if they had a season-ending injury in **mid-season**. Once again, the athlete is prevented from participating in the remainder of the year and will miss the remaining two seasons. Moreover, a season-ending injury in mid-season would be horrible because athletes have put so much effort into pre-season to prepare for mid-season:

"Whereas, especially if I went through the whole pre-season and then I got injured

and I was out for the rest of the season, that would be horrible". (Claire, 23, recreational player)

As the year progresses athletes work even harder to reach the ultimate goal of making the playoffs. In **end-season**, if an athlete is injured there is not a lot of time remaining in the season and if the team doesn't perform well and qualify for post-season play, a very severe injury may become a season-ending injury. In this situation the athlete will be prevented from playing in the remaining season. As these athletes explained:

I think that the severity of your injury at any point would be bad especially at the end of the season because if you got hurt very badly at the end of the season then you're pretty much done for the year and if it's bad enough you're not going to be involved in playoffs... (Julie, 20, varsity player)

...if you were going to be the difference between the team making the playoffs or not, that would be extremely frustrating and if you weren't going to make the playoffs either way then it's a season ending injury instead of an end of the season injury. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

If the athlete believes that he/she will not be able to make it back for the last part of the year, he/she may not be motivated to recover from the injury quickly:

I mean, if it looks like it's gonna pretty much put an end of your season, you've got post-season to go but you wouldn't be playing anyways then, 'yeah, who cares, I'm not gonna rush back to get back into things...'. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

...you don't want to end the season hurt at any time, that's just a bad feeling and you don't have that same urge to get better as quickly. You just let the natural healing process take place instead of rehabing it as fully as necessary. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

Athletes may even begin to question whether they should continue being part of the team and may worry about the possibility of coming back next year:

You might as well kind of forget about it and you wonder if coming to practice everyday is worth it and all those kind of things. So your emotions are just running high and then you think 'well, is it going to be bad enough that I'm not going to be

able to get back next year'... (Julie, 20, varsity player)

Again, an injury in **post-season** may become season-ending depending on how well the team is performing. If the team does not win their games in post-season they will be out of the running for the championship and the injured athlete will not have the opportunity to get back onto the court before the season is over. Similarly, if the athlete has a very severe injury, he/she may still be unable to participate in the post-season (even if the team is successful) because post-season is such a short season lasting only one to two weeks:

"I'd say more anger, post-season cause' there's nothing you could do, it's a time where there's no time to, like, come back unless it wasn't as severe". (Beth, 22, recreational player)

This depends on what your chances are because the post-season can be long depending on how good you are. So, if it's a very severe injury and you know that it's just that's it, you're gonna be done then you're gonna feel differently than if it's not that severe of an injury and you think you might be able to make it, like, if you're gonna go to OFSSA or something. (Kelly, 22, recreational player)

Although, athletes do not miss any other seasons if they have a season-ending injury at this time, athletes reported that they would still feel hurt, angry, and let down because playoffs are a very important time of the year:

Playoffs is the biggest deal. If you're gonna miss playoff games, that's bad news. So, I definitely think that if you know you're going to be out for the season right away then that's the worst. (Kelly, 22, recreational player)

Similar to end-season, there is no time remaining in the season for the injured athlete to look forward to. Consequently, the athlete may not work hard to recover because the year is finished or he/she could recover properly over the off-season because he/she is not rushing back to play in the next season (See time remaining variable for quotations).

**Recurring injury.** Some injuries continue to haunt athletes throughout the year. Many

athletes commented on the negative aspects of recurring injuries and their impact on each time of the season. In **pre-season**, for instance, athletes who are working hard in rehabilitation but can't seem to fully recover from an injury begin to question whether or not they should keep trying to get back into the game. A recurring injury at this time may convince the athlete to take time off and rest the injury so that it can heal properly. This athlete explained how a nagging injury can reinforce negative feelings about the injury:

If the harder I'm trying to, if the harder I'm working to get back in and when I finally get back in I end up getting injured again or aggravating the same injury then it just becomes negative, negative and sooner or later, you'd just be like 'maybe I should take the season off or rest'. (Brad, 22, recreational)

Similar to pre-season, a recurring injury in **mid-season** reinforces negative feelings about the injury, however, the fact that games are being missed to allow the injury to heal, only frustrates the athlete further. Still, athletes are willing to take time out to rehabilitate the injury properly:

I tried to play through the injury and just kept getting re-injured and re-injured and coach pretty much just thought that if I sat a weekend out and sat a couple of practises out, it would actually heal it and it actually did. So, it got better but actually sitting out and missing those few games was pretty frustrating. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

In **end-season**, a recurring injury becomes even more upsetting because despite the fact that the athlete may be trying hard to rehabilitate the injury, it never seems to heal and people begin questioning why the athlete is hurt again. Furthermore, the injury may effect the amount of playing time the athlete receives because the he/she can't perform up to his/her full ability. The athlete may be forced to rest the injury and recover properly if he/she wants to contribute to playoff games.

These quotations reveal frustration and anger associated with a recurring injury in the end-season:

I think so because if you keep re-aggravating your ankle then obviously something's wrong, especially in the end-season and I know my teammate, he rolled his ankle

and he keeps rolling it and if he rolls it in the end-season, he works so hard to get back healthy and then he rolls it again, you're obviously going to be pissed.  
(Andrew, 22, varsity player)

...it would make me feel really upset if I had this nagging injury that wouldn't go away and I couldn't do as many things as I normally do like I couldn't stay in long enough, for a long period of time and I had to ask to come out and things like that. That would make me feel really upset at myself and at my injury for always being there and not getting fixed, even though you might be working on it, it might be something that you just can't fix so that would make me very upset...people start to say 'oh my gosh, this person's always hurt, how can they always get hurt at the end?'. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

If the athlete is injured with a re-occurring injury in **post-season**, however, he/she doesn't have time to recover and return to sport. There is very little time remaining in the season and if the player aggravates an old injury, he/she is finished for the remainder of the season. The athlete may feel angry, frustrated, confused, and upset because it is such an important time of the year to be playing:

...coming back and trying an injury, you probably can only do that during the first three seasons and once you hit playoffs, once you're done, you're done, even if you try to get off, it's more frustrating to get injured then. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

"...I know if a lot of players get injured they scream and they're like 'no, no, no...' so, they would be confused and upset at the same time". (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

### Nature of Injury

The nature of the injury is also considered in athletes' appraisal of their injury status. Specifically, the location and the classification of the injury are assessed when athletes are faced with an injury situation.

Location. Athletes' emotional reaction to the injury experience is contingent upon whether or not the injury restricts their ability to play basketball. Although, injured athletes may be

disappointed that they are injured, they may not be as frustrated with the situation because depending on which part of the body they have injured they may be able to continue participating in sport. For instance:

...if it's sprained I can still come out even if it during tryouts, come out and maybe shoot or whatever. I could still walk on it but I can't run. So, I wouldn't be that frustrated because I could still shoot and it'd kinda ease the frustration because I'd still get to practise my shooting skills but not running the ball across the basketball court. (Andrew, 22, recreational)

The location of the injury on the body may also affect the athlete's personal goals even though the athlete may be able to concentrate on other areas of his/her game. Again, this helps the athlete to view the injury situation more positively:

...especially if you have a foot injury and you're trying to increase your vertical, things like that are very frustrating. So, in terms of affecting your goal, it'd definitely affect your goals depending on the stature of your injury. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

"Depending on the injury again too, if it's a specific injury that makes it really difficult to shoot but everything else is okay you'd have to refine [your goals]". (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Interestingly, athletes only spoke of the location of the injury in relation to the **pre-season**. It is possible that the location of the injury on the body was not considered in athletes' appraisals of the three remaining seasons because games become central to athletes participation in sport during these times. Consequently, no matter what part of the body is injured, the athlete may still not be able to play in the games that occur during mid, end, and post-season.

**Classification.** The type of injury the athlete incurs (i.e. a sprain versus a break) is considered at all times of the season. In each season, athletes' emotional reaction to the type of injury hinges on their perception of the time required for rehabilitation and the severity of the injury. If the athlete feels that he/she may still be able to participate because the type of injury is

less severe and the recovery will be quick, he/she will respond less negatively to the injury than if the situation were to be reversed. The key difference in athletes' emotional response between the seasons is the variables that may be affected by the athlete's inability to participate due to the type of injury he/she has experienced.

In **pre-season**, for example, athletes are preparing for tryouts and are excited to start a new year. If they believe that the type of injury they have sustained will prevent them from participating in sport for a long time, they will be disappointed and frustrated:

...if it was an ankle injury you would be okay with that because within a week or two, you'd be alright but if it was a break you could be done for the entire season or half of the season at least. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

Of course, all athletes do not think that pre-season is an important time. These athletes may not be concerned about their injury status whatsoever. One athlete explains that the type of injury he may have in pre-season does not matter because he would not miss anything important:

In the pre-season...if I sprained my ankle and I was going to be out for two weeks, if I broke my foot and I had to recuperate for six weeks, at the beginning it doesn't matter, well, it matter's I guess but you're not going to be missing anything important. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

In **mid-season**, however, the ability to play injury-free is very important. Athletes do not want sit on the bench for any length of time because the team is playing games now and athletes need to contribute to the team's success. The following quotation illustrates how the type of injury affects athletes' emotional reactions:

...if you have a sprained ankle, you know you're going to get over it and be right back in there in a week or maybe even less than a week but something like a broken leg, it'd be hard to keep upbeat because you know you're going to be down for the season and all you have to do is sit and watch. So, deep down, I think emotionally, you'd be distraught because you actually do want to get in there and frustrated because sitting on the sidelines would be very frustrating, looking at your teammates being successful or unsuccessful, knowing that you could either attribute

to the team or not. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

It is even more crucial for the athlete to participate in **end-season** games. In fact, many athletes would play with minor injuries because they want to contribute to the team in any way possible in the end-season, even if it is less than usual. As these athletes stated:

... if it was a minor sprain it wouldn't matter I'd play, I wouldn't care I'd play anyways. I'd just tape it up and go out anyways and if I can't play as much so be it but at least I was contributing but if I break my arm and I can not play I don't know what I'd do. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

I know lots of players who have just jammed their fingers or have a minor ankle sprain and they'll probably ice it for a day, wrap it up, and you're out there the next game... (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

If the injury does prevent them from participating, however, the athlete is less concerned if the injury that is classified as minor because he/she may be able to return in time to participate in the post-season:

End-season is the whole season so for the first couple of games it sucks to miss them but if I know that I've a sprained ankle and I'll miss so many games, I know I'll be back in time to make an impact.. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

On the other hand, if the injury is classified as major the athlete may be prevented from participating in the remainder of the season which, in turn, may effect the team's chances of making playoffs. These athletes may feel sad and helpless:

If it's something more severe like an ACL tear or something like that then you're pretty much out and end it off in a bad way, end it off in that injury then you don't get another chance. It's pretty much over. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

...if I were to break my arm or something like that, knowing that right now we're not assured a playoff spot. We're trying to make the playoffs and so right now would be the wrong time to get injured. I'd feel I don't know I'm trying to think of a word that would summarize me sitting there and watching our team play in vain. Helpless maybe because I'm injured and there's nothing I can do about it yet. If I was out there, there's a lot I could do about the game. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

The only thing athletes who have suffered a major injury can do is rest and hope that the team can qualify for playoffs so that the athlete can contribute to the team then:

...a broken ankle, you'd give yourself more rest time to try to get back in because it's the whole momentum, you just don't want to get off and not be part of it. If you do then you're not going to stay in touch with everyone else and it would affect your play. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

If the team is able to participate in **post-season** play, even a minor injury at this time may cause the athlete to be concerned because it could compromise the athlete's position coming off the bench and the amount of playing time he/she is given:

...depending on the length of the post-season, any injury could be pretty devastating. I might be more concerned about a sprained finger in the post-season than I would be in the pre-season, well maybe not a sprained finger because you can still play with that but something smaller during the post-season might compromise your playing time or position on the team. So, it might be more frustrating... (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Still, if the injury is viewed as minor the athlete may opt to play anyway because the post-season is such an important time of the year and he/she has come so close to reaching the ultimate goal of winning a championship. These quotations reveal the importance of playing in the post-season:

...if it's an injury that you can play through say, you hurt your hand and you can just tape it up and play then it's not a big deal because you're just gonna keep playing and say 'oh, whatever, it's game to game, I better just give it all I have'. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

...this is what you've been working for, you finally get there, it's win or lose, if I had a sprained ankle I'd play anyways it doesn't matter. If I had a broken arm, I won't play unless I get a sport cast or something but you'd try everything you can. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

The only way an athlete will not participate in the post-season is if he/she physically can not play basketball. If the athlete believes that they have a major injury he/she will reluctantly sit on the

bench for the duration of the year. This is hard for the athlete to do because he/she has worked hard all year to get to this point and the team's success may be jeopardized if the athlete can't play. The following example shows how frustrated, disappointed, and helpless athletes in this situation may feel:

If it was very severe you'd be helpless and disappointed. You'd definitely feel those because if I break my arm after we win the quarter finals and we have three days before the semi-finals but you know you're not going to play because you're going to be in the hospital because you broke your arm, it's almost beyond words. You've played the whole end-season, you've worked to get there, you've one the first post-season game but then you break your arm and can't go on, it's beyond words the disappointment. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

### Recovery Time

Following the onset of sport injury athletes consider the amount of time needed for rehabilitation. Their subsequent emotional response to the injury situation is based upon the duration of recovery and the timing of their return.

Short recovery period. The less time the athlete is forced to stay out of sport due to injury the better. A short recovery time is perceived positively because the athlete will be able to return to the season quickly. In **pre-season**, athletes used words like upbeat, positive, and no big deal to describe how they would feel about an injury that would require little rehabilitation. Athletes felt that they would be able to deal with an injury that involved a short recovery period better because they knew that they would be able to heal in time to participate in the pre-season:

I'd say the first part of your season because you know you have a long time to get yourself together and strengthen yourself, especially if it's not as severe you could still be there for the beginning of the season when games begin. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

...if I sprained it, I'd be kinda like 'well, I can rest it for a week or two' and try and play on it again and make it to tryouts and whatnot. So, the severity does affect how you treat your emotions towards the situation. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Similarly, athletes who become injured in **mid-season** feel more positively about an injury that will recover in a short period of time because they will be able to return to the season quickly. They know that they are not missing any important games and will be able to recover in time to play in the end and post-season when winning is essential:

Again, if it's only a couple days then in the long term it doesn't really mean a lot because those games don't necessarily mean anything, they're just exhibition games, they're just sort of warm-up. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

If I'm injured in the mid-season and I can see myself getting better by the end or towards the end of the mid-season at least I can see that it's gonna heal and I'm gonna be able to play. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Indeed, the games become very important in the **end-season** because they determine whether the team moves on to post-season play. Many athletes do not want to be out of basketball for any length of time at this point in the season. Therefore, athletes may respond negatively to an injury in end-season even if recovery is expected to be short. They may feel disappointed and guilty because they can't contribute to the team:

"...if the playoffs were in doubt and if it was just a light injury it's a crucial time. So, even if I missed out a week which, might be two games then I'd still feel like I was letting the team down". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

The success of the team is critical in **post-season**. The team must win their games because if they aren't successful the season is finished. If the injured athlete plays on a strong team he/she may feel somewhat confident that the team can continue to win long enough that he/she could return before the season ended:

"If your injury is something that's going to recover very fast, that's great because at least you can play the rest of the post-season..." (Doug, 24, recreational player)

...if it wasn't a severe injury, if was just you were out for a week or two, you wouldn't give a damn, I don't think and you'd know be back before the season ended and you could be there to help the team and you wouldn't be as upset. (Beth, 22,

recreational player)

Of course, if the athlete believes that the team will not perform well in the post-season without him/her, the injured player may not have the opportunity to return to sport before the end of the season even if he/she can heal quickly:

If it was a lesser injury like you had to miss a game, it would depend on the results of the game.... So, it's just a matter of how your teammates play. Say if you are in a three round playoffs, first round, second round, championship game and you get hurt in the first round and your team's still winning that game and you have to miss the second game but if they win you'll be back for the championship game then you want your team to the second round game... (Peter, 26, recreational player)

Many athletes in this situation will play through the injury to help the team win:

"...if it was a short-term thing, you'd probably want to just play through it regardless of if you're hurting or not, at this point". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Long recovery period. It is inevitable that some injuries will require a long rehabilitation.

The longer athletes are out of sport to allow the injury to heal the more negative the emotions they will experience. In **pre-season**, athletes who have a long recovery period ahead of them may be upset, furious, disappointed, let down, and distraught because they were anticipating the start of a new year and now they are unable to participate. Athletes who are injured also miss the team bonding, physical and skill training that occurs at this time:

"If you get injured in the pre-season, depending on the extent of the injury, if you know it's going to take you out for the season then it's a big deal...". (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

"...if they say 'oh, you're going to be out a month', that really sucks or even more than a month that could really hurt you". (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

...I would feel almost like I wasn't developing as a member of that team. I don't know if I can think of one word to describe that but I would feel like I wasn't developing the way I should be in terms of, along with my teammates and along with my, the physical aspects of it . (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

Athletes faced with the challenge of a long rehabilitation feel negatively about the injury situation in **mid-season** as well. In the mid-season, athletes are upset and frustrated because it is an important time of the year in terms of shaping and re-defining the team, missing games, and training for the upcoming seasons. For example:

"...the more games you miss, the more frustrated you're going to get. You want to get back into it so the severity actually has a lot to do with it". (Fred, 22, varsity player)

...a longer term injury, even though there's that initial team building and strategy building, throughout the season, the more games you play, the more a team is going to shape itself and I wouldn't want to miss out on that, that re-defining of the team and that re-defining of my role on the team. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

mid-season is training for the end-season and playoffs. So, if you're out for a long time in the mid-season, you lose a lot of your training for the end-season and post-season which, is a lot more crucial. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

In **end-season**, there is very little time remaining in the year. Consequently, if an athlete must spend a great deal of time out of sport to recover, he/she may not be able to return for the rest of end-season and maybe part, if not all of post-season. If the injured athlete is able to return before the end of the season, he/she may be concerned that he/she may not be physically able to play up to his/her ability because so much has been lost when the athlete was forced to sit out. In this example, an athlete reveals how tough a long-term injury can be:

...a major injury at that point in time, realistically, it pretty much finishes your season because even if you're wanting to recover from the injury, say, you're out for a month just with the injury, by the time you get back into shape physically, like, you're never going to get to the point that you were at or that you had to work up to. So, I think that can, that's a pretty tough time to get injured at that point in the season. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Other feelings such as frustration, anger, and devastation may also surface if the athlete believes that the team's chances of making playoffs are jeopardized because he/she can't participate

in the end-season games. The athlete may see his/her goal of making the playoffs crumble if he/she can't recover quickly enough to join his/her teammates on the court:

"If I was missing almost all the games up to the playoffs then I'd be really, really mad, especially if the playoffs were in doubt...". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...if I were injured for a month basically, I'm out of the end-season and possibly half way through the playoffs and that would affect my goals because now kind of what I've been trying for all season, if I don't get back into shape or if I don't get over this injury quick enough then I'll miss everything I tried to work for. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

In **post-season**, there is even less time remaining in the year. This is the last season before athletes are given a rest for the summer. If an athlete is injured at this time and must spend a long time rehabilitating the injury, he/she will not be able to play again that year. These athletes explain why there is no hope of returning to the basketball court if the injury requires a lengthy recovery:

...in terms of time off, if you're in post-season and you get hurt, if we're imagining a three to four week scenario then you're done and that's the problem with getting hurt that late in the year because there's only one week left and you're out for three weeks then you can't come back in time and you end your season on the worst note possible. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

...if it's something that's gonna knock you out for a week or just enough that you can't play the rest of the games, that's horrible because you're there already if the injury happened and you're gonna have to sit on the bench and watch and you're like the water boy which, is horrible especially, if you've been with the team up until that point. That's hard. It'd be hard to swallow. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Again, the athlete may feel like he/she has let down the team because the team's success may be affected if the athlete is unable to play:

So, the severity I guess in a way it does too because if it's really bad and you come back and you try play on it and there's no hope and you're just like 'oh, I can't do anything, I'm out' then you have that feeling of let down, you've worked so hard and so long to get to this point, to the playoffs, to prove that you're the champs and you're injured and you can't prove anymore and if your team has relied on you to help prove then your team has no proof, can't prove it either. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

**Timing of return.** Athletes may or may not be able to return in time for the remainder of the season and/or the season following. Athletes' emotional reaction to the injury will be more negative if they are forced to sit out one or more seasons due to the severity of the injury and the amount of time needed for rehabilitation. In **pre-season**, for instance, injured athletes who believe that they will be able to return in time to participate in mid-season games will feel more positive about their injury than athletes who are benched for pre and mid-season due to an injury. These athletes perceive that they can still be a contributing member of the team:

"As long as I could rehabilitate it to the point where I'm well enough to play for the exhibition games". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

"...if you think you're going to miss the whole season, that's more of a let down than 'okay, well, I can come back in a couple of weeks and still be part of the team'". (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Other injured athletes, however, may perceive the pre-season as an establishing point for the entire year. Even if they were able to return before the start of mid-season games, they would feel frustrated and let down because they need to train in the pre-season to prepare for the upcoming seasons. One respondent commented:

...it could really hurt you because some players use pre-season as a building block...it all depends on the player, some players start out at a low level and reach their high level by the end of the season so, depending on how they started the pre-season, say they have a good couple and it looks promising for the pre-season and they get injured could emotionally hurt you, really. (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

If the athlete is injured in **mid-season**, he/she is mainly concerned with recovering before the end and post seasons begin. He/She would almost sacrifice mid-season to participate in the end and post-season because mid-season games are not viewed as important as the games later in the year. Therefore, it would not be as bad to miss out at this time as long as the athlete could return for the "regular season" which is viewed as more important:

I think if I had an injury that wasn't severe the mid-season would be the best time to be injured because I was still able to participate in the pre-season and I can see myself playing towards the end of the mid-season or the end-season. To me, that's when everyone's getting to know each other and if I had pick one point to not so badly injured that's probably when it would be. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

...if it was only out for a couple games then 'okay, it's exhibition, I'll still be around for conference' but if it was severe enough that it would keep me out of conference then I would be very disappointed. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

The games in **end and post-season** are very important because they determine whether or not the team will have a chance to reap the championship title. As a result, athletes will feel more negatively about the injury if they perceive that they will not be able to return for the rest of end-season and may be prevented from participating in post-season. This situation may occur if the team doesn't perform well and qualify for playoffs or if the injury is very severe and the athlete is physically unable to participate in post-season games. These athletes are likely to encounter feelings such as frustration, anger, devastation, and disappointment:

...gonna be at the end of the season soon and that means it's finished and you always want to do as much as you can and if you're having a bad season and you know you're not going to make the playoffs then that's it. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Athletes in this situation may rush back in **end-season** before they are ready and re-injure themselves. This participant admitted that the importance of playing in the end-season may take precedence over a proper recovery:

...you'd be really mad compared to the other [seasons] because [you're] ready to play, [it's] close to the end of the season and then you get hurt and that sets you back, you'd want to be playing and sometimes you might go, rush back too soon just because of the time of the year and could hurt yourself even more... (Ted, 20, varsity player)

Yet, other athletes may give up on rehabilitating the injury altogether. In a different interview, the athlete insisted that injured athletes may not try to recover from the injury if they

believe that the team will not move on to the playoffs or they will not be able to heal in enough time to return for the final season:

...just that hope of being able to play for the playoffs because the playoffs are so important would make you be more aware of your injury as well and monitor it and just the hope to see progress is getting better. Whereas, I think, if you knew that there was no hope of coming back for the playoffs, you would just be 'okay, I'm injured', you wouldn't, there'd be nothing to get better for. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Athletes will not always react this way to an injury in end-season. Some athletes may not be as upset following the onset of injury because they know that their team is performing well and consequently, they will be able to return to sport before the end of the season.. This athlete explains how the possibility of returning before the end of the year to contribute to the team helps injured athletes view the situation positively:

If it's going to end your season, that's a huge thing. I think knowing that you're going to get back even if it's just for a few games, is a huge thing. Again, generally you can foresee when you're going to be back, you can always predict how long it's going to take until you're better so I think as long as you can get back into it and end the season having played and not sitting on the bench is a big thing for me. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Still, even if the athlete believes that he/she will be able to return for the end-season, he/she may not feel like he/she has contributed to the team's success. The majority of games are played in the mid-season and if the athlete has not been able to participate in them due to injury, the athlete may think that he/she does not deserve to play in the post-season:

I think devastated is one, especially if it means that you're gonna miss the majority of the season, say you're only going to be able to return for the last couple games then you're not gonna feel like you contributed any post season action you might get after that as a result of your season... (Abby, 22, varsity)

...shouldn't even be in the playoffs if you didn't help get there. So, if I'm out for a month and seeing that it's only, well, I've indicated here that the end-season's only for two weeks, that'd be rough. That'd be very rough. So, that'd be bad. (Doug, 24,

recreational player)

If an athlete is injured in the **post-season**, however, he/she may be unable to participate in the games that he/she has worked so hard all season to play in. Once again, if the injury is very severe or the team performs poorly the season is over, the injured athlete must accept the fact that he/she will be unable to have the opportunity of playing at such an important time of the year and focus on getting better for the next year:

...maybe the second game I was injured, it would hurt because you know you're definitely out for, if the severity of the injury keeps you out for the whole post-season then you know you're definitely out for the whole post-season and that really hurts and even if the injury wasn't as severe, you're still worried that you might get knocked out before you're able to come back and play. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

"...if you're injured and can't play and because you can't play, the team loses then the season's over...". (Terry, 22, varsity player)

"...if it is a serious injury, you have a lot of time to rehab for the next time round". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Still, many athletes play more than one sport. Some athletes who are injured in post-season may be looking forward to the sport season that follows and if the injury is very severe the injured athlete may miss out on the start of the next sport season:

...if you do get injured in the post-season it would affect your basketball season and if it is a very severe injury then if you play other sports it kind of carries on. Say volleyball is the next season, you don't start off that season in a good way. That would kind of affect everything else because it's the end of that season and it's the beginning of another season. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Athletes' feelings will be more positive if they perceive that they will be able to recover and play in the post-season. The possibility is a motivating factor in recovery. To quote:

"The possibility of coming back would probably make you more positive". (Diane, 19, varsity player)

I would still be really upset because you are still missing a few really important games. So, it would be upsetting and disappointing but it would kind of be relieving too because you know you could come back and just work twice as hard to make up for your self when you weren't there. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

### Previous Injury Experience

Athletes appraise their previous experience with injury by reflecting on their injury history in general. That is, how their previous experience with injury would affect them at any time of the season. In this situation, athletes who have experienced the injury before have an idea of how long their recovery will be. This is the same for all times of the season, however, many athletes felt that this appraisal would be most useful in the **end/post-season** when there is very little time remaining in the year because then the athlete would know if they would be capable of returning to sport:

...depending on how severe your injury was before and how severe your [present] injury is, then maybe [your previous experience with injury may help you] put them into perspective...because it kind of prepares you, you know how injuries play out. It might give you a chance to figure out, how long you might be out of commission depending on how severely you hurt yourself. If it's a simple sprain, something that you can walk off in a couple minutes or something that's not so bad but a broken finger, a broken nose, something more severe, even a charlie horse, I've had a charlie horse, it's not really an injury but that hurts, playing with a charlie horse that can effect your game...that would effect how I would see the injury in the post-season...at any time but more so in the post-season because it's coming at the end of the year and pretty much all that you've trained for to get to that place and so if you get injured at that time it feels pretty bad and it's kind of good, not good to experience other injuries, it's just at least you can relate how severe the injury is or you might have an idea about how long you might be out. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

### Circumstances of Injury

#### How Injury Occurred

Following a sport injury, athletes try to understand what caused the injury to occur. In **pre-season**, an athlete may become injured because a fellow team member intentionally injures the athlete in hope of taking the player's spot. For example:

...in pre-season, everyone's fighting for spots, you know, people maybe, cheap shot you, even though you're teammates, sometimes they don't mean to cheap shot you but they do. (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

Or the athlete could take full responsibility for the injury. If the athlete perceives that the injury he/she could have prevented the injury, the athlete may react differently depending on the reaction of his/her teammates and coaches. One athlete felt that she could laugh about it if teammates and coaches were supportive. Another athlete felt that teammates and coaches would treat a player who was blamed for his/her injury with very little regard. In this situation, the athlete would feel very let down because it was a "stupid" injury. The following quotations show the varied reactions to an injury that could have been prevented in pre-season:

...it doesn't really affect me much because I can just laugh about it too because they're just stupid injuries and I could have totally prevented it and it was just dumb on my part too. So, it wouldn't be a big deal. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

...so when one falls back, you're letting the team down especially if it's through stupidity or something... if it's a dumb injury, something that could have been prevented, say, if it was because you didn't properly exercise or warm-up or you weren't geared for it then you're letting the team down. It will reflect in the practices when you're not really friendly with [the injured player] anymore. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Athletes who were interviewed didn't comment on the causes of injury and how they may affect their emotional reaction to the injury situation in **mid-season**. At this point in the season, games are not considered important and for this reason many athletes feel that there is very little difference between mid-season and pre-season. They are both periods devoted to preparing the team for the end and post-season where winning games becomes critical. As a result, athletes may have felt that their emotional reaction would not differ from pre to mid-season.

Athletes did, however, indicate that their feelings would change in **end-season** if they were injured and could have prevented the injury from happening. Athletes said that they would be angry

at themselves for letting the team down because the games are so important in end-season and an injury may cause the team to lose:

"I'd be angry with myself. I'm pretty sure my teammates would be angry with me also especially, if it's through a dumb injury or something...". (Doug, 24, recreational player)

The games are so important at this time that even if the injury is not the player's fault, he/she may encounter negative emotions because a lot of pressure is being placed on the player to help the team win games so that the team can qualify for the playoffs. Teammates may feel animosity towards the player whether the injury could have been prevented or not:

Even though you know that it's not your fault, you always feel bad like 'oh, I shouldn't have stuck my leg out or I shouldn't have gone up for that rebound'. I think that's the point where you might feel more pressure, you might feel more badly about that. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Indeed, the injured player may not be responsible for the injury. A teammate may accidentally hurt the athlete or an opponent may use aggression to intentionally harm the athlete. In either case, the athlete is likely to feel very angry towards the person responsible for the injury. These quotations explain why athletes would be furious if they were injured in end-season by another person:

Say, my injury is due to another player's goofing off. That would probably make me furious because if I get injured for someone else doing something stupid say, they're goofing around we're just playing, scrimmaging and they try doing something stupid...That would make me mad because it's done stupidly and that would probably send me over the board, blow-up at them. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Depending how the injury happens, if it was a dirty play and someone purposefully injured you, I'd be really upset and angry, just wanting to get up and get revenge. If it was a dirty play and you really get hurt then that's not right...It probably be worse if it was near the end-season, post-season because by that point everybody's really frustrated and competitive and someone gives you a dirty elbow then you'd really get mad and you don't get much of a chance to get back at them. If it was early on in the season, maybe not as bad because you get to play them again and you have

lots of time to get back and recover from the injury. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

In **post-season**, athletes may encounter the same situation. The injury may be caused by an opponent or a fellow team member. In either case, the athlete will respond as described above because the games are so important in post-season. The athlete may miss his/her only chance to win a championship title. Even if the athlete perceives that the injury was an act of fate, something that could not be avoided, he/she still may encounter negative feelings because the post-season is so important. Many athletes realize that many teams never get the opportunity to play in the post-season and that their team may not be able to qualify for playoffs the following year. As this athlete explained:

It would be very disappointing especially, if you knew the following year you might not have those same opportunities and you just feel cheated, like it was taken away from you and you don't know why that happened and you feel cheated and everybody else is disappointed, not let down because I mean, nobody can prevent something like that from happening. It would be definitely difficult. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

### When Injury Occurred

In all seasons, athletes are likely to feel negative about an injury that occurs outside of sport, however, athletes also consider an injury that doesn't occur in competition negatively because they aren't injured fighting to help the team win. In **pre-season**, for instance, athletes may feel embarrassed or even guilty about incurring an injury because it is early in the season and the team hasn't even started playing games:

I think if it was just the beginning, I'd feel almost a bit embarrassed because you haven't really got into anything or any real competitive play...I've been playing with the same group of people all my life pretty much so if I got hurt early on then it's almost like a let down to the other team members. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Once the games begin in **mid, end, and post-season**, athletes are also perturbed if an injury

occurs in practise or in the warm-up period before a game. These feelings are intensified as towards the end of the year because the games become so important. Any injury that occurs outside of the game situation in end or post-season is viewed negatively because the athlete wasn't hurt in action:

If I get injured just before a game even in the warm-up before we're gonna play a game, that would bother me in the mid, end or post. I like to think that I try hard in every game post, mid or end-season. So, it would bother me either way...I'd rather be injured in the game, while playing the game than being injured out of the game, for some other reason... (Doug, 24, recreational player)

...if your injured in practice you feel cheated cause' practice is practice. You're playing with your own guys. I would rather get injured in a game then get injured by some idiot on my team, slapping in the head and knocking me unconscious but if I did the same thing in a game, I wouldn't say it makes me feel better but you know that you did it in competition not in practice. I guess that would make a little bit of a difference. You would get very, very annoyed if you won a playoff game and then you guys were just practising between playoffs and you got injured, that would suck...Towards the end of the season it would get a lot worse if you were to get injured in practice because it would be a waste. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

### Athlete Status

#### Starter

At each time of the season, injured athletes who have a starting position on the team react differently than non-starters to the injury situation. If a starter is injured in **pre-season**, for example, he/she doesn't have to worry as much as a non-starter about losing his/her starting spot on the team:

...I'm pretty sure the coaching staff knows, coming into training camp, they have a pretty good idea of who's going to get the significant minutes that year. So, even if they are injured as soon as they overcome that injury, they're going get thrown right back into their starting slot anyways. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

...a starter if they were injured in the pre-season, they don't really have anything to worry about losing their spot because they can come back but a non-starter, they're always trying to their best to try to show the coach that they can play. So, it's

always an evaluation period for a non-starter and for the starters, they know when they come back they'll have their spot... (Ted, 20, varsity player)

In many cases, coaches and teammates are supportive of starters who are injured at this time. The team wants the injured player to recover quickly because starters are a major part of the team and their contribution is essential when the team begins playing games in mid-season. This also helps the starter look at the injury situation more positively:

...it depends on your position on the team too like, if one of the benchers got injured and wasn't one of the top picks then they'd offer support, it wouldn't be as big of a deal but if you were one of the key players or starters then I'm sure the captain and coach and everybody would be really supportive, trying to get you back into the game if you were injured. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Nonetheless, pre-season is a very competitive time of the year. Some players may view the starter's injury as an opportunity to move into that position and when the starter does recover from the injury and return to sport, he/she may have to prove to the coaching staff that he/she deserves his/her position. If the starter is automatically placed back into his/her position there may be some animosity among his/her teammates because the starter hasn't participated in the hard work/training of pre-season. Many athletes acknowledge that a starting position on the team isn't guaranteed and for this reason they would feel frustrated and disappointed by the occurrence of an injury in pre-season:

...if I'm not a starter, not saying myself, but some players, especially in the pre-season when you're fighting for spots, say I go down and I'm a starter, the person behind me, their first reaction should be 'oh, I hope he gets better' but ninety-five percent of the time that means that bumps my rotation up in the game... (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

...if you have a starting position and you're out, someone else has to take your spot. So, when you come back you have to prove that you deserve your spot again and then that person might be upset because they've been working hard and you haven't been there so, you haven't put your time in and then if you come back that's going to cause [problems]. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

Starters also need to be able to participate in pre-season to establish a leadership role on the team. If he/she is unable to participate, the other team members may be worried that the team may do poorly in the upcoming season and in turn, doubt their ability to have a successful season. For this reason, starters may experience more guilt in pre-season than non-starters:

...being on a team there's leaders and they get the team together and show leadership and say the leader hurt herself or one of the main players hurt themselves that get the girls going, that could let down the rest of the team and they wouldn't feel as confident going out on the court, ready to play because one of the main players is injured. (Vikki, recreational player)

...for the starters, usually they would be one of the top players and if you're not there, you feel guilty especially if the team is going to go down hill from there or not doing as well. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

...if you were a starter and you got injured, people look to you for leadership so if you get injured and you get down on yourself, everyone else is going to see that as the example and think that 'it's going to be a terrible season'... (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Coaches continue to define players' roles on the team in **mid-season**. If the starter feels confident that he/she will not lose his/her position to his/her replacement he/she is less likely to encounter negative feelings, however, many athletes felt that mid-season is a developing period in which starting and leadership positions are secured. If the starter is injured at this time he/she may lose his/her role on the team:

I think [mid-season is] the beginning of the season and it might compromise your position as a starter if you miss out right at the beginning. Obviously, someone else is being given a time to shine and I've seen it happen before where somebody's injured that's usually a starter and they don't get back on because that other person proves that they're perfectly capable of doing it. I think in that sense it would be very frustrating to get injured right then, miss out on the very first few games and then to not ever get put back into that position. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

I think that if you're a returning player or you have a big position on the team then it's important that you're ready to play when the games start, even if they're exhibition because then you'll lose your leadership role if you're not out there. So, I

think that it is important for your position. (Beth, 20, varsity player)

Similar to pre-season, an injured starter may receive more social support from the coach because he/she contributes more to the team's success but now that exhibition games are underway, teammates may blame the starter if the team begins to perform poorly without his/her contribution. Even if the team is supportive, the starter may feel negatively about the injury if the team begins to lose games. The starter may believe that he/she could help the team improve their record if he/she could participate. For these reasons, injured starters may be more concerned, worried, and discouraged about an injury in mid-season than earlier on in the year:

...if you're the star player and you're injured then obviously, they're going to be more concerned about it and getting you back in action. Whereas, if you're not then obviously, they're still concerned but I think you can definitely see a difference in the way that they respond to those situations. As far as your teammates go, sometimes seeing someone on the sidelines, if it's a star player, it can be discouraging because a lot of people will blame things on the injury...So, I think it can be a little discouraging or a bit of a scapegoat almost for some people... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

...if you're a starter then you're definitely missing games and you're definitely missing starting for those games and you're just hoping someone off the bench can contribute to the team as much as you do and that's pretty much all you can do, you can only hope and since it's mid-season and games can win or loss and that reflects your record, it's pretty important. So, as a starter, I'd say the average, I'd say any starter would be worried. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...for that player because the team might end up losing games then they feel 'if I was out there, I could be contributing' and it's hard when you're sitting on the bench and you feel that you could be out there contributing and you can't. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

However, if the team is succeeding without the starter, he/she may take the necessary time to recover properly. If not, the injured starter may push through the injury to come back and help the team before his/her injury has fully healed:

... this is the games now and if we're winning I'll just take my time. If we're losing

you want to get back as soon as possible because you know that you have an impact on these games like if we go out and lose 5 games in a row by 5 points and you know you can contribute at least 15 or something then you feel like, not that it's your fault but because you're out you could be losing those games because you contribute another 10 points. If we keep losing by small margins, you feel that if you were in the game you could be winning those games. You feel you want to get this treatment or this recovery time on the road. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

If a starter is missing due to injury in the **end-season**, teammates may worry about their ability to make the playoffs because at this point in the season, the team has had enough time to develop as a cohesive unit and without that one player, they may not be able to perform as well. This is especially important if the team is performing poorly before the injury and isn't guaranteed a spot in the playoffs. The team's goal of qualifying for post-season play may not be realized without the starter's contribution. For this reason, starters experience a lot more pressure and guilt in the **end-season**:

As a starter, this is the time when you really got pull it out, especially if the playoffs are in doubt, all the money's on the line. Basically, the whole season is about making it to the playoffs. So, when you're a starter you feel like you're contributing more to the team than the bench people and you feel that your contribution is greater. So, if you're a starter and you get injured, it just makes you feel like the team's missing more than that of a non-starter... (Barry, 25, recreational player)

If I'm a starter I'm and I'm supplying most of the points on the team and I'm out for a month, the season is only two months or one and a half months so definitely, our goal is to make playoffs and we won't make playoffs. If I was out for a month and we were losing all our games definitely, guaranteed to affect your goals. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

If you're a starter, they're gonna react entirely differently than if you're a non-starter. If you're a starter, usually the coach wants to know every day how you're progressing and when you think you're gonna be back so that she/he can plan...are they gonna fill someone in that spot permanently because you can't be there and who's gonna do it..It makes you feel more upset about the injury because not only are you upset [about] not reaching [your personal] goal...when that many other people are effected by what you are or are not doing, I think it makes you feel worse. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

I think the frustration level might be a little bit higher then because they're used to having you there and having to change things over once you've got everything the way it should be is always frustrating. Generally by the end-season you're pretty set in your ways and everybody's used to playing with everybody else on specific lines and to have to change that right before playoffs, again they can't blame you but I definitely think that they'd be more frustrated...I think you'd feel maybe more guilty about being injured, especially if they did react that way. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Starters are also needed in end-season because they provide leadership for the team on the court. If they are unable to play due to the injury, teammates may start to question the team's ability to succeed in such a competitive part of the season. As these athletes explained:

...usually top players they kind of, not control the team but they bring the team together and show leadership and stuff and it's a lot different if it's coming from the bench and it's not someone on the floor that usually does it. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

...a lot of the times the girls look up to you for the support, to know that I'm on the court and they can count on me and if we've gone through that much and we're already nearing the end of the season, if I get hurt, they're gonna be let down and they're gonna not feel so good about the team. (Vikki, recreational player)

In this situation, the starter would react more negatively to the timing of the injury. He/she may feel guilty and helpless because he/she can't contribute and help the team win important games:

"You'd feel very upset, frustrated. You'd want to be out there. You would be angry. You'd just, it's really, really hard watching when you know you could be out there helping". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

It would be hard because you would feel responsible in a way and guilty, even though you know this is not your fault but you always feel like you've let your team down, in a small way but in a significant way in your mind because it'd be hard to get over that thought. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

These feelings may be compounded by the responses of the coach and teammates to the starter's injury. In end-season, the coach must scramble to find a replacement. It is unlikely that the

replacement will be able to contribute to the team's success as much as the starter did which, in turn, may lead to a negative reaction to the starter's injury. The coach and teammates may be upset because they need the starter to play and help them succeed. The following quotations illustrates how stressful a starter's injury in end-season is for the team:

Somebody like a starter, it would affect the team a little bit more because, we'd be going helter-skelter trying to get the replacement and trying to get the replacement in game shape and get the replacement mentally focussed for the games because obviously, they're big games coming up and somebody that didn't get significant minutes is automatically thrown into the mix, they're gonna be probably a little bit emotionally distraught and turned around behind themselves. So, I'd say that it would affect the coach and teammates reaction, especially during that time of the year, more so than the beginning of the year. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

I think your teammates might take it a little bit harder at that time of the season, depending on your role on the team. It might have a bigger blow on them as far as the success of the team in the future if you're a big player and it comes down to this point in the season where you've got to start winning some games, you're trying to qualify for playoffs and your starter goes then I think that it could be a bigger let down than it is earlier in the year. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Starters may even be blamed for the team's poor performance in end-season if they are injured and can not contribute. This is frustrating for the starter because he/she doesn't want to be held responsible for the team's losses:

Again, it's just that much more frustrating because you feel that if the team doesn't make the playoffs, you don't want it to be blamed on the fact that you're hurt, you don't want to offer excuses. So, you disappoint the team more by not being able to contribute that much. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

These reactions may influence the injured starter's recovery. If the team is performing poorly, the players may pressure the starter to rush rehabilitation and return to sport before he/she is physically ready to play. As this athlete notes, the pressure from teammates only places stress on the injured player and does not facilitate his/her rehabilitation from the injury:

[If the team's success depended on the starter's ability to play], that would be a lot

of pressure too. You probably could get rushed back into coming back too quickly but it would reveal a sort of urgency in you to get back to the game a bit. It'd probably be pretty stressful too at that point too, if you're injured and they're like, 'come on, we need you'. I think it could increase your stress level, it probably wouldn't help in recovering from the actual injury if you're really stressed out about coming back... (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Therefore, it is important that teammates are supportive and encouraging throughout the rehabilitation process - despite their personal worries and fears. A positive reaction may help motivate a starter to recover from the injury:

Again, depending on the position or status of the team, if I were a starting player or pretty important, sixth down on the bench, I think they'd react more, be more motivated, more trying to get me back into it, the motivation that you need around that time to get back into it and once you see that from the players, it pushes you back more, to do stuff. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

In **post-season**, the pressure to succeed is even greater. The team must win its games to continue playing and if a starter is injured, the team's ability to succeed may be affected. The starter's contribution is essential at this time:

...if I was a starter and I get injured in the post-season, I'm out for a month, obviously, I'm going to miss some pretty important games and if you're a starter getting some extra minutes you can live and die by that. A player or a team is only thirteen players deep rather than one player but a significant player, it is going to have a dramatic effect on the team, especially during that time of the year when those important games do come rather than just the exhibition games at the beginning of the season. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

Like in any of the other parts of the season that key player is really important in the post-season, most important in the post-season. Teams that do well in the post-season are usually teams with their whole squad and all their starters out there. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Although other players may try to replace an injured starter and the team may not change its goal of winning the championship, realistically, the team may not have the ability to accomplish their goal because the starter is unable to play due to an injury. This is very hard for the starter

because he/she may feel like he/she could have made a difference. Athletes used descriptive terms such as letting team down, disappointed, hard, straining, more frustrated, more helpless, bad, overwhelming sadness, more upset, really difficult, more stressful, useless, really devastating, and totally mad to describe how they would feel if they were a starter could not contribute to the team at such an important time of the year:

Well, it would definitely change, I guess injury would be more stressful or important if it was towards the season, the post-season because the games become more important, the playoffs and everybody wants to win. So, if you're a key player on the team and you get injured, it's a let down to everyone else, you feel useless. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

As a valuable player, especially maybe if your lead scorer is gone that's gonna effect whether you think you're gonna make it to the finals. As an individual, if you were looking for an all-star, that type of thing, you can't really do that when you're not participating but you'd like to think that the team would still have those same goals regardless. Whether they're met or not is something different. I think that the team would still have the same goals and other people would have to try and step up. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

This situation is also very frustrating and upsetting for an injured starter because he/she has worked so hard all season long to help the team make the playoffs and now they are unable to participate in the most important games of the season that they have been anticipating the whole year:

Oh, if you're a starter and you have this group of five people and together you've accomplished so much to get you to this stage and then all the sudden you can't be a part of it for no fault of your own and there's nothing you can do about it. That's a frustrating thing and just overwhelming sadness that you would feel about being removed from such a thing that you've worked so hard on... (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

It is also very negative for the injured player's teammates and coaches. They may worry about their ability to win if a key contributor is injured. Starters generally contribute a great deal to the team's success and are hard to replace. Therefore, the starter may receive more attention from

teammates because the team really wants him/her to rehabilitate quickly:

I think this depends on your position too, on the team. So, I think that if you're a coach and a teammate of someone who's a starter or a very high scorer or something like that and they get injured, you're definitely disappointed and you're thinking 'how are we going to win without this person? They've helped us win the whole year and now they're injured'. So, I think they're very disappointed... (Julie, 20, varsity player)

Even so, the starter may feel like he/she is letting the team down. He/she knows how important his/her contribution is to the team's success and in turn, may experience a great deal of guilt over the injury:

Again, if you're a starter, they're gonna be more upset than if you're a non-starter. Coach is going to do some mad scrambling to try to figure out what to do... (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

...at this point, the people who are playing are your best players and if your best players get injured at this point and you depended on them all year to win you games and they're not able to help you now then that's very difficult and if you are that player then I think that you feel like you're letting everyone down. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

This feeling may push a starter to recover and return to playing as soon as possible. This athlete explains that starters may be more motivated to rehabilitate the injury quickly because they want to help the team win:

"I think that you'd feel that you'd want to get better, if you're someone who's a big part of the team...". (Julie, 20, varsity player)

### Non-starter

For various reasons, non-starters react much differently than starters to the onset of injury from one season to the next. In **pre-season**, non-starters who are injured may feel less frustrated, guilty, and upset than starters because they don't expect to receive very much playing time in the upcoming season. A non-starter who doesn't believe that he/she will play very much in the season

is less likely to be as discouraged by his/her injury and may use the injury as an excuse for why he/she is not participating on the court. These players are also less likely to be motivated in rehabilitation because they know that they will not be given very much playing time when the games begin:

So, if you're a non-starter and you don't play very much then I don't think you're gonna be that upset. Almost, like 'well, I'm injured and that's why I'm not playing'. It gives you a chance to say, to have an excuse for sitting almost cause I've seen people do that too, pretend that they get injured all the time and then they'd say 'well, I'm not playing well because of whatever'... (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

"...the starter might be more motivated to come back and a non-starter probably wouldn't be as motivated...because they probably don't get as much playing time...". (Diane, 19, varsity player)

Non-starters may also be less motivated to recover from an injury in pre-season because they don't receive very much social support from teammates. Generally, non-starters aren't viewed as an integral part of the team's success and therefore, teammates aren't as concerned if a non-starter is injured in pre-season. This reaction may make the injured player feel like he/she is useless and an unimportant part of the team:

...if you're not a starter then it doesn't seem as important...because you're not the top scorer or the top rebounder [and the team] can do without you and so you feel useless. Not part of the team... (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

There are a number of other reasons bench players may encounter negative feelings following an injury. First, in pre-season a non-starter is not guaranteed a position on the team and must be in top shape to prove to the coaching staff that he/she should be included as a member of the team:

"If it was a tryout contest [being injured in the pre-season would affect my goal of] getting on the team...". (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Even if the player survives the cuts from try-outs, he/she may hope to show the coaches

that he/she deserves a starting position on the bench and that he/she should receive more playing time. An injury in pre-season may jeopardize his/her chance to improve his/her status on the team. These athletes may feel discouraged, frustrated, and disappointed that they were unable to meet this goal but may also be motivated to recover quickly if they believe there is an opportunity for advancement :

...I was trying for a starting position this pre-season and I will be next pre-season so, getting injured at a time like that, when the coach is trying to figure out who's gonna be where is very important. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

"...I guess if you were on the bench like, coming off the bench, getting injured, you might think that your chances aren't as good to get more play time". (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

That would be frustrating especially if you were riding the line of becoming a starter because if that was one of your goals then you would feel pretty frustrated about that and feel like maybe you couldn't fulfill it because you're one step behind but it also might motivate you to work a bit harder to come back but it would definitely cause some stress . (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

It is also important that non-starters remain injury-free in the pre-season because they need to prepare for being called off the bench to replace tired starters in a game situation. Non-starters are needed in the pre-season to help starters train for the upcoming season. Therefore, non-starters may feel negatively about an injury in the pre-season because they contribute a great deal to the team at this time:

...in the pre-season, everyone's just as important...Because you can't just alternate, have just the 5 main players, you have to have it like a team and it's not that we're using them so we can practice on them because we do draw on them, it's very rare that every player plays or the first 5 players play the whole game so, we have to improve our second strings and perhaps even third strings at that time...pre-season, second string, third string people, all players are very important. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

If you're a non-starter, I would say it doesn't affect you as much but sometimes bench people are relied heavily upon, especially in difficult games at the beginning

of the season and you're still contributing to the team whether you're a bench person or not and the other teams rely on you and when you're injured in pre-season, it hurts because you want to be prepared, you definitely want to be prepared for when you're counted on coming off the bench. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

I'd feel the same way [as a starter] because when you're a non-starter, you have to be prepared to play with whoever you're put on with so, you need to know. Again, as a starter, you have your starting 5 and you don't really have to worry too much about the bench because if someone off the bench comes they're either subbing in for you or subbing in for someone else and it's just one person you still know the other three guys on the court with you but as a non-starter you have to be prepared for any situation you get put in and you can sit and observe but you don't get the actual feeling of playing with the guys. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

In **mid-season**, non-starters also contribute to the team's success as a back-up for starters in the game situations and in practice to help with training. If a non-starter is injured in mid-season he/she may feel negative about the injury because he/she feels like he/she does contribute to the team and now cannot. This participant acknowledged how angry he would feel if he were unable to participate in mid-season:

I'm a bench player and I don't really get significant minutes. So, emotionally, deep down, I'm gonna be mad because I like to practice and I like to practice hard with the team and not being able to practice hard with the team, I'd feel it might be taking away because those players that need significant minutes, actually need us role players in there, actually help them and run the drills in practice and if they get into foul trouble in a game then we go in and things like that. So, emotionally it would affect me and emotionally I think it might affect them as well because if a starter goes from playing against a second string player in practice to playing a third or fourth string player, that starter might not practice as hard which, in the long run might have an affect on the team or his intensity during games... (Jack, 23, varsity player)

Athletes who were interviewed also admitted that non-starters may feel concerned, stressed, and emotionally disturbed if they were injured and forced to stay out of sport in the mid-season. Mid-season is still a period in which roles are being defined. Consequently, a non-starter may feel negatively following injury because it prevents him/her from demonstrating his/her

capabilities as a player to the coach. His/her personal goal to become a starting player may have to be postponed until next year:

I'd say non-starters would react differently because that's their time to prove themselves and to show the coach that they're ready or good enough to be a starter or to be first one off the bench or whatever. So, I'd say the non-starters would be probably be emotionally disturbed about it. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

...if you're not [a starter], it would probably be the same emotional stress [as a starter] because you'd be working that hard to try and get to that position and then that goal would be totally shattered because you'd be out. So, I guess, it would be sort of a different type of stress but it would, I think it probably would be similar... (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

It is also important to non-starters to be healthy in the mid-season because this is the one time in the year when they actually get playing time. It is very important for non-starters to get into the game during mid-season so they can learn from the experience and develop as a player. If a non-starter becomes injured he/she will respond negatively to the injury because he/she misses out on this opportunity:

...in the mid-season [non-starters] might actually have more opportunity to get on the floor versus during the actual season because the games aren't severe importance so, they're gonna have opportunities to get on the floor, get the minutes and show what they're capable of and they might feel like that opportunity was taken away from them if they're injured at that point. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

"I think it's important for [non-starters] to be healthy at that time so that they can get the experience that they need so that later on they can contribute what they've learned...". (Julie, 20, varsity player)

Coaches realize the importance of this opportunity as well. They may be disappointed that the non-starter is injured in mid-season because they want the non-starter to learn how to play with the team. Coaches also want non-starters to be able to participate in exhibition games so that they can observe the player in action and determine how much the player has improved since the year before:

**I don't think it's that big of an issue during mid, exhibition season. I think that it's important for the coach to see you play at that point and if you've never seen him before or if you've made a lot of improvements and adjustments since the year before then I think that his reaction or her reaction would be to, they would want you in there. So, they'd be a little disappointed that you weren't playing right then but I think it's probably better then, than during the regular season. (Julie, 20, varsity player)**

**...the coach, he still wants you out there...if we're putting in new plays...you can watch it but it's not the same as if you're running through stuff. So, your mental part of the game...would be affected a lot...I think he'd be negative because you can't learn as easy from the sidelines as you can on the court. (Ted, 20, varsity player)**

**Of course, not all non-starters will react negatively to an injury in mid-season. The intensity of the starter's reaction depends on the amount of playing time the he/she receives. There are different levels of non-starters; second-string players who get placed into the game more and third string who don't get to play very often. The more playing time the player is given the more negatively he/she will react to the onset of injury:**

**...third string, I'd imagine they wouldn't particularly care if they're injured or not, generally you don't want to be injured but if they're injured, sitting on the bench, generally third string is not played too often. Second string is just as important as the first, I find because the first may, you know, get you a lot of points. Second string is generally to maintain and just get a couple more while the first string rest. That was our game strategy...second string people, just as important, if they were injured, I'd imagine they'd be letting the team down too. (Doug, 24, recreational player)**

**Similarly, a non-starter who doesn't receive a lot of playing time may not be as motivated to recover from the injury as a player who is placed in the game more often. Non-starters who know they will be placed on the bench for the entire season have very little reason to recover from their injury:**

**I think at that point, it might be more important than it is in the pre-season because your roles are developing and it could be taken two ways, if you're a non-starter, you could be the type of person who wants to become a starter and wants to work as hard as they can and this is just a set back and they'll recover from it as quickly**

and that. If you're in that position and you have the desire to become a starter then I think that, obviously, you'll probably recover from your injury than you would if you're last man on the bench and you're not expected to go any where else and that could probably be a little bit more discouraging in that case...there's no real desire to get past the injury. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

A non-starter's reaction to an injury in **end-season** also depends on how much playing time he/she receives. A non-starter who has a higher position on the bench and is played more often is more likely to respond negatively to the injury because he/she does contribute to the team by supporting the starters. Conversely, a non-starter who doesn't participate very much in the game may not experience such negative emotions because he/she doesn't get to play much anyway:

...as a non-starter, this is the time when you're counted on most for backing up the starters. So, if you get injured then the starters have to look to someone else and you're not really happy when that happens, especially in these stressful times. So, you would feel really bad about that too, as a non-starter. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

With a non-starter, if you get injured in the end-season, depending your position as a non-starter, if you're the sixth man, if you're that dude they always rely on to come in then it sucks but if you just fill in whenever the big guys get tired or whatever then there's a bunch of other guys on the bench with you. It's not really going to make a difference. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Non-starters who do not play in the game very often may be unconcerned or even relieved that they are injured because they do not have to go through the humiliation of being thrown in the game for the last 30 seconds and/or worry about the pressure that accompanies end-season games:

... if I was one of those people who only played in the last thirty seconds I couldn't care less. If I broke my arm, means I don't have to practice which sucks but most practice is just running anyways and in games, like it matters, cause' you know you're not going to get in the game and actually I found it retarded getting in with 30 seconds left in the game. I found it didn't do anything. It just made you feel stupid like you're in front of your whole crowd, you sit there the whole game and then we're losing by 30 so [the coach] puts you in, it's kinda degrading... (Fred, 22, varsity player)

...if you're not a big part of it then maybe you're like 'oh, well, that's good now

maybe I don't have to put all the pressure like, hopefully I don't have to do anything too pressureful. I can just sit back and watch and feel the emotions but not have any pressure on me to do anything really important'. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

These players may actually use the injury as an excuse for why they aren't on the court and may less motivated to recover from the injury because they know they will not be played again that year. As these participants acknowledged:

...if you're a non-starter and you get injured, I've seen people even say 'well, you know, I'm just not playing because I'm injured'. So, to some people they, not that they want to be injured but they see their injury as not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes they conjure up things that you wonder about, how real that is... (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

I mean, if it looks like it's gonna pretty much put an end of your season, you've got post-season to go but you wouldn't be playing anyways then, 'yeah, who cares, I'm not gonna rush back to get back into things...'. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Again, the non-starter's emotional reaction to an injury in **post-season** depends on how much playing time the non-starter expects to receive in post-season play. The more playing time, the more negative the reaction:

I don't think it would be as bad but then again, there's non-starters who will play a lot so their role on the team might be the same on the team as a starter. So, you'd feel just as bad...[and if you didn't play a lot] I don't think it would be as bad because at the playoff time of the year, the people that are playing the most are going to play the whole time anyways. So, if you didn't play that much in the regular season it wouldn't be that much of a set back as somebody who did all the time. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

...some one who plays a small role on the team doesn't feel like they really contributed to it then the injury might not be that big of a deal. Whereas, someone who's worked hard and has gotten the team to that point in the season then that's huge and if your team went on and failed past that because you weren't there then that's probably even bigger because you knew you had the potential to succeed... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Generally, non-starters don't get played by the coach in the post-season therefore, an injury at this time is not as bad as earlier in the sport season when the non-starter actually makes it onto

the court. As two athletes stated:

Post-season play, you don't really go as deep on the bench. During conference play we go maybe 8 people deep, sometimes 9 people deep where, in the beginning of the season we go 13 people deep. So, during post-season, I don't really think it'd have as big of effect, me, personally being injured than a starter or being injured in the pre-season. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

...if you're a non-starter, not that you don't necessarily feel like you're a part of the team but you have a different role on the team [and] usually, you have a pretty good idea that you're not going to make it into the game anyways. So, you're gonna be less likely to feel [that the injury is] a big deal. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

For many non-starters this situation may be ideal. They may be relieved that the coach will not put them on to the court because they don't want to perform poorly at such an important time of the season. An injury in post-season guarantees that the non-starter will not be put into the game. In this case, the injured athlete may look at the injury positively:

...I remember being first year, playing two minutes a game happy to get in a game and being in the playoffs and being almost relieved not to go in the game. So, if I was a first year kid, scared out of my pants, playing the biggest game of my career and to be injured, it would almost be a stress reliever, emotionally you'd be stable because you know you don't have to go in and worry about screwing up when you go in there. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

Yet, not all bench players feel positively about an injury in the post-season. Some non-starters do feel negative about the occurrence of an injury because they can not participate in the post-season. These players want to feel like they are a part of the team even if they do not make it into the game. They may feel angry and frustrated:

...if I was one of the guys who didn't get all the major minutes then I wouldn't be as worried about it. I'd still be frustrated because I couldn't be there and dressed, just to be a part of it but I would, the team's goals wouldn't be as compromised. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

If the injured player doesn't come off the bench during post-season games, the player's teammates will not be very less concerned about the injury. They know that the injured player is

not important to the team's success and consequently, do not provide very much social support for the player. As a result, non-starters are less motivated to recover from an injury in the post-season:

...if you're not someone who [contributes to the team's success], they'd feel bad for you but they're kind of like 'well, they haven't really done anything all year so, well, maybe we can get by without them'. So, I think it depends on your position for that...you'd feel that you'd want to get better, if you're someone who's a big part of the team but if you're not, you might not be pushed to get better, therefore, just letting the injury heal on itself and not getting it properly looked after, therefore, causing recurring injuries. So, I think it's not a good thing that players and coaches and teammates react like that but I think if that if you could react positively towards everyone and push them, make them feel like they're very important on the team and that would be a lot better than just saying 'well, they don't really play so, don't really worry about it...'. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

### Success

#### Personal Success

Once pre-season is underway, athletes can track how well they are performing. Athletes who have achieved personal success in any given season are more likely to feel negative about an injury for many different reasons. If the athlete is performing well prior to the injury in **mid-season**, for example, he/she may lose his/her confidence in his/her ability to perform at that level when he/she returns from rehabilitation. An athlete in this situation, may feel that he/she has lost all of the physical strength and conditioning that was gained in pre-season training:

"...mid-season would probably really emotionally hurt you because if you're having a good pre-season and you get injured, that could really hurt your confidence when you come back..." (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

It would be disappointing cause' if you were injured for a month and you came back then you would just be that many steps behind the team. You'd have to work yourself up again and try to get into shape and just to keep up with everybody.  
(Beth, 22, recreational player)

In the **end-season**, if the athlete was performing well prior to the injury, he/she may blame him/herself if the team begins to lose. Athletes have a good understanding of their contribution to

the team by this point in the year and if the team performs poorly without the injured athlete, he/she will feel frustrated and guilty:

"...if you were playing well before the injury and then you got injured, I think it would affect you more than if you weren't playing as well". (Ted, 20, varsity player)

If I felt that I'd been playing really well and because I'm not there maybe there's a missing link I might feel badly about that. I don't really think it would be that bad but it would probably cross my mind but again only if I felt I was important player on the team. If they weren't doing well and I felt it was because maybe I was really good at guarding that one girl in the first game and now I'm not there in the second game then I would feel badly about that because I would feel that's my job and I'm not doing it and that might be why we're losing. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

These feelings are intensified if the team begins to perform poorly in the **post-season**.

Again, if the athlete was performing well prior to the injury in post-season, he/she may feel responsible if the team begins to lose because he/she is not able to participate. Participants said that an injury in post-season would be emotionally hard, straining, and affect them more:

...if you were a starter and you were having a good season then you'd be totally mad because you were a major part of the team and you'll feel that your injury will bring the team down. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

...emotionally it's probably pretty hard having an injury during that time of year, especially when you know that you've actually had a successful year and you're thinking back on all the games that you did win and the ones that you did make and then all of the sudden they come to a halt due to injury, that's got to be pretty straining on a point player, especially a starter. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

### Success of Team

If an athlete incurs a sport injury in **pre-season**, he/she may respond positively or negatively to the injury situation depending on his/her appraisal of the team's success in the previous year.

Successful. After experiencing success the year before, a great deal of anticipation surrounds the upcoming season. Athletes are excited to begin pre-season because they want to continue their success into the new year. Therefore, an injury at this time is a big let down and may

**result in negative emotions:**

**I think that you'd want to continue that on so, you'd still be excited for the new year and you know what it's like to win and what it's like to play in intense games. You think 'oh, I'm hurt, I'll never be able to be involved in that stuff'. Even though I can be all emotional on the end of the bench, it's not really the same as being in there and really helping. So, I think it's a let down when you get hurt in pre-season because you're so ready to just start new things, it's a brand new year and maybe things will be better or maybe they'll be just as good as last year. So, I think it's very tough. (Julie, 20, varsity player)**

**A good performance by the team in the previous year also allows the athlete to set higher expectations for the following year and he/she may feel pressure to uphold the team's winning reputation. Consequently, an injury in pre-season may be frustrating and could possibly jeopardize the team's status in the upcoming year especially because pre-season is an important time in terms of training/conditioning. The athlete may feel that he/she is letting down the team:**

**Well, at the beginning of the season, you always set expectations to make playoffs or to make it to the second round of playoffs or what kind of a record that you want to have that year. So, if you have a successful year, the year before, obviously, it's probably going to be a little bit more frustrating knowing that going into the new season, a season full of potential of actually getting further. (Jack, 23, varsity player)**

**You want to keep up the reputation you have. You want to defend the title, if you have a title. You're level of expectancy of your playing level is definitely at a high rate, especially if you've done well, the past season and when that dips, it gets you down and if you're injured then you worry about that status and that hurts a little bit more... (Barry, 25, recreational player)**

**Of course, previous success may help the athlete to be more confident in his/her team's ability to persevere in the face of injury. This depends on whether or not the same players are coming back. The dynamics and structure of the team must be the same for the athlete to feel less concerned about an injury in pre-season:**

**The way I see it, myself and fellow teammates know how to get there and we've been there before and it's a great rush and excitement and stuff but me, I would**

think of it as, 'well, I'm injured and it's just the pre-season...So, I still have a chance to get to the hunt'...it wouldn't be that much of a concern... (Brad, 22, recreational athlete)

Situationally, say, you have a team that did really well and gelled together and performed well, you already have an idea of your team and your team has an idea of you already then like, therefore, if you're injured in the pre-season, people are like 'okay, you're out for a bit but you're ready to come back in, we feel confident that we know each other well enough' but if you're team's changed around a bit and again, you're a key player and you play that key role then it's probably a different outlook. You'd feel more like you should be there for the team and you can't be. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

In any case, the team's previous success may motivate athletes to recover quickly from their injury. If the team has performed well the year before, the athlete wants to get back onto the basketball court because he/she is optimistic for the year ahead:

In my first year, we had a very successful year and if I was injured following that year, in my pre-season, knowing that I had the same team and the ability to have the same success, it gives you even more encouragement to work through it... (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Unsuccessful. If the team performed poorly the year before, however, an injury in **pre-season** may be perceived very differently. If the player that is injured is a starter/leader of the team and the team experienced a losing season the year before, the injured player and his/her teammates may feel let down. The anticipation of a new start and the hope for a better season may be destroyed by the occurrence of an injury at this time because the leader can't actively help other players on the court to raise their playing level and ability:

...if you're a leader or a starter on the team, I know for us, we haven't good times the last few years so coming in to pre-season, you think 'oh, new coach, new start, maybe we'll be better this year, maybe I'll be able to help more' and then all of the sudden you come back and you get hurt and it's a total let down because you thought it was going to be better and you can help out but really you can't right now. Even though everyone likes to think that you can still be a leader and help your team from the bench it's very hard to do that. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

**I think that would be the situation where you would feel that this is a chance to take your team higher. You want to do better...and then in that situation, you're feeling sort of helpless, you can't be a part of that and depending too, on your role, a struggling team that loses their leader, you sort of feel even at that point in the pre-season, that it's almost hard, almost impossible to come back from that. (Rob, 23, recreational player)**

**Starters may be placed back into their starting position when they recover from their injury because they can contribute so much to the team. This may lead to some animosity between the player and his/her teammates because if the team had performed poorly the year before, the coach may work the athletes harder in pre-season and some team members may be upset if the injured athlete is played more in games following his/her recovery because he/she has not had to participate in the intense training:**

**...if the team did poorly the year before, you want to try just as hard and God knows, our coach would have made us run harder or drilled us much harder and that's important because then that's when the animosity would probably kick in, if you've missed some of the practises and then you played more than someone who's been attending practice all the time just because you might be more skilled at basketball but still, people who try hard should be played more. (Doug, 24, recreational player)**

**Failure in the previous year, may or may not motivate athletes to recover from their injuries. Some athletes said that they would try hard in rehabilitation because they would be motivated to improve their performance in the upcoming season while other athletes felt that they would be less motivated to recover because the team may repeat it's poor showing once again. The following quotations illustrate the impact athlete's perception of the year ahead has on their behaviour:**

**"I'd probably feel the same way just because we had such a disappointing season the year before, the only way to get over that is to come out and have a great season". (Andrew, 22, varsity player)**

**If the team did poorly in the season before, you'd get kind of motivated to say**

**'okay, well, it's a new season, we're going to do a lot better, you know, gonna improve on my personal bests, the team's bests and just improve the team generally'... (Brad, 22, recreational player)**

**"So if it was a difficult year... you might think 'well, why am I even working through this if it's just going to be a losing cause in the end anyways?'" (Janet, 22, varsity player)**

**I suppose if you suffered a major injury and your performance the year before was quite poor...that would probably be pretty discouraging...I can't see there being much drive and desire to recover from your injury seeing as there might be otherwise, if you had performances good for the following year. (Abby, 22, varsity player)**

**Of course, there are a number of reasons why athletes feel that the team's success in the previous year would not affect their emotions if they were injured. Many athletes said that they focus on the team's future rather than looking back on past success/failure. This is in part due to the different conditions (team structure/dynamics) inherent in the new season:**

**...when I'm in the pre-season, I'm looking ahead, not really looking back. I remember the team before but I don't think being injured would have any effect on how we did the year before. (Terry, 22, varsity player)**

**I think that there's a lot of differences as far as coaching strategies, new players on the team, players that have left the team. I know that sometimes if you've done really well the year before you want to do that well again but I think that every year it's always a new team there's always different conditions. I don't really think that would have an effect on me anyway. (Claire, 23, recreational player)**

**The impact of previous success may also hinge on the individual him/herself and how much he/she loves to participate in the sport and/or how competitive he/she is. The team's success or failure the year before may not be important to these players because they are more concerned about their ability to play than the team's performance:**

**...I think people are in it for different reasons, especially in high school and people who aren't really that competitive, it probably wouldn't make a difference for them, like, with the whole win-loss thing. Maybe not, it maybe wouldn't make that much of a difference. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)**

...I think it depends on the player but for me, I think I'd be frustrated regardless because of how much I just love to play, I love to be successful and...that's what we all work so hard for but there's a lot of other things that I play for and I would be just as disappointed, I think. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

In addition, previous success may not impact a first-year player because he/she wasn't a part of the team's success the year before. As this first-year player explained:

"...I'm first year and I don't really know what went on last year...it didn't really affect me just because I wasn't on the team last year". (Diane, 19, varsity player)

In mid, end, and post-season, athletes have played long enough to assess the team's standing in the league. They know how the team has fared against other team's in the league and have a good indication of the team's potential to succeed. As a result, athletes' reactions to the injury situation vary according to how well the team is performing before and during the injury.

Success prior to injury. If the team is performing well in **mid-season** before the athlete becomes injured, the athlete may experience negative emotions when he/she is injured especially if he/she is a key player because the team's success is in question. The team may not be able to continue to succeed without the injured athlete's input and it is difficult for injured athletes to sit and watch their team lose when they know that they may be able to help the team win:

Probably more now than it would have in the pre-season but less than it would in the playoffs...if you were a winning team or in the top rankings it would be really hard not to be playing especially, if you were a key member of the team...because it would be frustrating not to be able to contribute to the team and it's easy to sit on the bench and to know what's wrong and it's hard to wonder what you could have done... (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

...if you're contributing and the team is doing well and then you're injured and the team isn't, if it really affects the team and you feel like you could be out there, that is very, very difficult and I've experienced that many, many times because to bring up the ball, not just anybody can be out there doing that and that's where the other teams are getting the points, the turnovers, etc. and it's really difficult to, it's not as bad in the mid-season because the games aren't of dire importance but it's still hard. It's always hard to watch when you feel like you should be out there helping out.

**(Janet, 22, varsity player)**

**The team's short-term goal may be affected if the athlete who is injured does contribute a great deal to the team. The team may not be able to finish end-season on a winning note without the injured player's participation on the court. This is frustrating for the injured player:**

**...if we're having a really strong season then it's gonna be really frustrating because if I'm a big part of why we're doing well, it's gonna hurt the team's goals...[to] end mid-season on a winning note and then get end-season off to a good start...those [goals] might not be achievable without a key member of the team. (Terry, 22, varsity player)**

**In end-season, if the team is performing well prior to the injury, the athlete may still encounter negative feelings because he/she can't participate in the game and consequently, the team may begin to do poorly especially if he/she is a key player. This participant reveals why:**

**...if it looks good for you and you're winning and then you get hurt...you want to be there and you want to be involved and this stage in the game too, once the dynamics of the team get disrupted it's hard for someone else to come in, if you're part of the starting five especially, you know, those 5 people usually know how, they know what's going on, they know where to be, they know what the other person is going to do. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)**

**If the team continues to perform well, however, the athlete may view the injury more positively. They know that there is no pressure to return to sport quickly because the team will qualify for playoffs. In this scenario, the athlete may see an injury in end-season as an opportunity to rehabilitate properly:**

**...if you were doing really well, you're kind of guaranteed your spot in the playoffs and the end-season wouldn't be as bad just because you kind of guarantee that spot and there's usually a week in between of the last game that you play. So, you kind of have a bit of time to recover and to relax and take it easy for a while. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)**

**...if the situation were, we're in first place anyway, we just have to carry it out and hold them off until we're in the playoffs and I have a chance to come back in the playoffs, okay, I'm alright with [the injury]... (Rob, 23, recreational player)**

Of course, if the team is performing well the athlete may feel like he/she isn't a part of the team any longer if he/she becomes injured because he/she can't actively participate in the team's success:

If you're doing good and then you get injured, you feel not as bad as if you're losing all your games but not as good as if you're in the playoff hunt...you kind of wanted to be there, want to be part of it... (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Whereas, if you've been successful and you're injured then it's pretty tough to be...theoretically, an unsuccessful person. It depends on how your team cohesion goes if you still feel like you're a big part of the team when you're injured and you're team is winning...that could help... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

If the team is doing well in the **post-season/going into the post-season** and then the athlete is injured the athlete is likely to encounter negative feelings because he/she is unable to contribute to the team after working so hard all year to reach this point in the season. Many athletes said that they would feel horrible, helpless, really upset, disappointed, and frustrated if they couldn't participate in post-season games because they have invested so much time and effort to be a part of the team's continued success:

...it would be horrible... if you were winning and it looked like you might win the whole thing then it would be worse than if you didn't, if you're in the playoffs and you're fourth and you're playing the first place team and you can't make it, you're gonna be upset...for me it would be horrible to know that you've been there the whole time and you've done all this and...this is what it's all about, make it or break it time and the whole helplessness of knowing that you can't contribute. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

Indeed, the athlete may feel like he/she is not really a part of the team because he/she can not be involved in the games. This athlete explains how he/she would feel like an outsider if he/she was injured in the post-season and couldn't contribute to the team's performance:

if you were supposed to win this game...you're in the CIAU championship game and you get injured and you can't play in that, that would be huge, not because you think you're gonna make a big difference in whether you win or lose but because

...you want to be a part of that feeling, you want to be on the floor when you win that game or if you lose that game... (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

The athlete may also feel guilty if he/she contributes a lot to the team because the team may start to perform poorly without the athlete's participation in the game:

If your team was doing well...I'd feel like I'd let them down...an injury happened and the success of the team has relied on you because you're starting...So, I'd feel like I'd let them down and they're gonna keep having to play without me. (Vikki, recreational player)

Probably because if you've been winning all through and you're the number one team and you're predicted to win the championship, the key player or not even a key player then, you want to be part of that winning team and if you get hurt then you don't feel a part of the winning team. If they lose you feel that it was your fault because you're a distraction, focus of the team. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Success during injury. If the team is doing well in **mid-season** the player may respond negatively to an injury for the simple reason that he/she wants to be a part of the success. They want the opportunity to contribute to the team's success and be able to lay claim on it:

"...if your team's being successful and doing well then you want to be a part of that". (Diane, 19, varsity player)

If the team does continue to perform well, the player may question his/her contribution to the team and worry about losing his/her spot/ability. Mid-season is an opportunity to establish spots on the team and the player may feel insecure because when he/she returns he/she may not fit in with the team:

...it would question my contribution to the team. I would wonder if I'm really contributing, if they're just getting lucky, if they're playing all the worst teams. If they were playing good teams and still winning then I'd definitely be questioning my contribution... (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...they could start winning and you could think 'oh, now they think that they don't need me', that might make you feel insecure too about coming back and maybe you don't fit in with this team, if they're going to win... (Rob, 23, recreational player)

Other players may be more positive because they focus on the good of the team. They are more concerned that the team continues to succeed in the exhibition games than they are about their injury:

"I think in the mid-season, you would be happy for your team, at that point...I don't think you'd be jealous at that point. I think you'd just be happy for the success your team is having". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

"I think maybe if your team was successful without you...that always is a bit of a shot to the ego but at the same time that's what you're hoping for". (Peter, 26, recreational player)

I guess if the team was doing pretty good in the mid-season, I wouldn't feel too bad if I got injured just because it's mid-season and we're doing great so, I don't think it would make a difference if I'm injured or not cause' the team's doing good... (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Recovery may be enhanced or it may not. If the athlete is discouraged because he/she isn't contributing and the team continues to do well he/she may be less motivated to recover whereas, if he she finds the success of the team almost inspiring he/she may be more motivated to come back and be a part of the success. In addition, the athlete may take more time at this point to heal properly and rest up because the team's success is not threatened:

I guess, you could feel put out if your team kept on winning and you weren't a part of that and you weren't winning and you didn't contribute to that. So, I suppose it could be...it could be discouraging or it could be a motivator to get back into the game. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

If they were winning and doing really well, I guess you wouldn't be affected as much because they're winning and you're kind of preparing for the playoffs already so you can kind of relax a bit and concentrate on recovery. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

By **end-season**, if the team continues to perform well the athlete is almost torn between two extremes of emotion. On the one hand, the athlete is positive because he/she wants the team to perform well but on the other hand, the athlete wants to be able to participate in the success and

may begin to question his/her role/contribution on the team if the team can still do well without him/her:

Slightly. If I can not play nothing's going to change the fact that I'm sitting on the bench and I can't play but...it makes it a little better if you're going out and still winning every game like, if I played for Western who never loses I'd be more concentrating on trying to just get back, getting into things and it's still frustrating sitting there watching your team play but if you can sit there and watch your team play up by 30 every game, it makes it not as bad. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

This is a tough, this is an interesting question because you can feel a lot of different ways, like, it's hard because you want them to be successful more than anything and if they are successful, you feel sort of like 'oh, maybe I didn't have such a big role in this success of the team'. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

And if they're doing well, could they do that much better with me in there or would they be doing worse with me in there? You'd always have it in the back of your mind. You always want the team to be successful and if you're not in there and not...the team's playing successful, I'd be happy for them. No matter if I was in there or if I wasn't... (Jack, 23, varsity player)

It is important for the success of the team to be continued because it is a big moral booster going into post-season. As this respondent noted:

Well, see, for my home town, there was 6 teams and the last 2 teams didn't make it to the playoffs so, everyone was fighting for the top spot and it was always just a big rivalry between schools so, the last couple of games were always, if you were winning at the end of the season and you could take the winning into the playoffs, that's always a big moral booster. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

More importantly, end-season is important because it determines whether or not the season is over or if the team can continue into post-season. If the team is able to do well when the athlete is injured he/she may feel more positive because he/she wants the team to make it to post-season:

"if you're so good that you could get into the playoffs without me playing then you'd be a little bit relieved at that...". (Peter, 26, recreational player)

The continued success of the team may hinge on the level of competition it faces. If it is a weaker team the athlete may feel more confident that the team will win even though he/she is

**injured:**

**I mentioned before about who you're playing that weekend, whether you're playing a weaker team or a stronger team. I mean, if you get injured before you play a weaker team on the weekend then you're pretty certain that your team's gonna win then, I mean, you might feel okay sitting out a week or so. (Abby, 22, varsity player)**

**If the team is performing well, it may motivate the athlete to recover and return to sport.**

**The athlete may also take time to recover properly without rushing back if he/she is confident that the team will continue to succeed without his/her contribution. This athlete explained why she would feel more negative about not being able to play when the team is succeeding:**

**It would make it worse. I mean, you'd definitely be more supportive for your team because you couldn't be there in terms of playing but you would want to support your team more and you'd want to be back out there and I think maybe that'll make somebody work harder. (Janet, 22, varsity player)**

**In the post-season, the team must continue to perform well to keep on playing because if the team loses one time, the season is over. Again, the level of competition may play a role. If player is injured and the team must face a weaker team, the athlete may feel more confident in the team's success:**

**I mentioned before about who you're playing that weekend, whether you're playing a weaker team or a stronger team. I mean, if you get injured before you play a weaker team on the weekend then, you know, you're pretty certain that your team's gonna win then, I mean, you might feel okay sitting out a week or so. (Abby, 22, varsity player)**

**In any case, athletes do not want to feel responsible for the team falling apart so if the team continues to perform well, the athlete may feel better about the injury because it hasn't affected the team as a whole:**

**If they were still playing well and trying to like, working hard even if they weren't winning that would make me feel a lot better, yeah. It would be better than seeing them, like, fall apart, not do well at all. (Beth, 22, recreational player)**

...if your team goes on to win without you then you're obviously thrilled that you're injury isn't an excuse for the way the season ended and you'll still be sharing the joy of the team. As much as you wish that you could have been playing at least everyone else's pleasure in the post-season hasn't been hindered. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

In addition, if the team can succeed without the injured player's input, the athlete may have a chance to get back onto the court before the end of the year if his/her injury is not too severe.

The athlete may be hopeful to return in time to be a part of the post-season:

This depends on what your chances are because the post-season can be long depending on how good you are. So, if it's a very severe injury and you know that it's just that's it, you're gonna be done then you're gonna feel differently than if it's not that severe of an injury and you think you might be able to make it, like, if you're gonna go to OFSSA or something. It's gonna make you feel, if you know that, that's it, you're gonna feel worse, I think than if you know there's a chance that you're gonna at least be involved somehow in that situation. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

If the team does continue to be successful when the athlete is benched due to an injury, the athlete may feel like he/she hasn't contributed to the team's success. He/she may question his/her contribution to the team:

If it wasn't as severe and you thought I might come back, it would, the same, I would be upset and frustrated or whatever but I would still have the hopes that I would be able, like, that the team would be able to do it but then even if they did do it, you'd feel like they did it without you and that would be just discouraging. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

...you hope that they win still but if they're doing really well without you, it kind of makes you think 'well, Jesus, I didn't really contribute to the game too much anyways', so, there wasn't any great loss with your injury which, makes you feel sad about it or even kind of start wondering whether or not you really contributed to the team or if you were just there as a fill in or something but personally, I would feel crappy (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Essentially, athletes want to share in the post-season success and being injured does not allow them to participate in the same way they may have otherwise. Of course, athletes are happy

for the team's success. If they are able to rationalize their own contribution in the previous season the athlete may not respond so negatively. Also, many personal/team goals have been met by this point therefore, the athlete can take some satisfaction in achieving those goals even if they are injured before the end of the year:

If they were doing good without me then actually, I would be kind of happy for the team if they were still doing good without me. Knowing that I helped contribute to get them there in the first place, I'd feel good about that and if they were doing, in the post-season, good without me then I'd feel happy, post-season, is about the team and what the team can accomplish and it's, I guess, it's really not a time to be selfish. If the team can do it, can win the playoffs without an injured person then that's great. As long as I help contribute to getting them there then at least I've accomplished a team goal and a personal goal, getting them to the playoffs. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

The team may not always experience success, of course. They have had an unsuccessful year prior to the injury or they may begin to lose after the athlete becomes injured. In either case, the team's lack of success in mid, end, and post season may lead to a number of different responses depending on the athletes' perspective.

Lack of success prior to injury. In **mid-season**, for instance, many athletes are unconcerned if an injury puts them out of participating because if the team has had a losing season, it is unlikely that he/she will be able to help the team perform better anyway. He/she will not be able to make an impact on the results of the team's performance:

If the success of the team was doing very poorly, not very successful at all and I get injured, well, I don't imagine that the team would be getting any better but if we're doing poorly before my injury then I guess, it doesn't really matter if I was out or not because they're still doing poorly... (Doug, 24, recreational player)

For this reason, participants acknowledged that they would be more willing to take the time needed to recover properly and wouldn't rush recovery:

"That would still be frustrating but not as because then I could think 'okay, I can

take the time to get better and then hopefully we'll be improving by then". (Terry, 22, varsity player)

"If you were on a really bad team, you might want to sit out a little longer... because the result is going to be the same whether you're there or not so, you don't feel as bad...". (Peter, 26, recreational player)

Athletes seem to be more accepting of an injury that occurs in **end-season** if the team is performing poorly before he/she gets injured. This is mostly due to the fact that the team isn't going to make playoffs even if the athlete wasn't injured. If the team was performing poorly before the injury, it is highly unlikely that it will be able to succeed after the athlete is injured because there is definitely a problem with team dynamics/ability in the first place. In addition, the athlete may not feel as negative about the injury because when the team is losing it is no longer a fun activity:

...if I could see that we weren't going to make playoffs and there was only 4 games to go and we're out of the playoff race then alright, it sucks that this is happened but I'm just gonna recover and can't play anymore think about next year. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

Again, it would be upsetting but maybe, not that much. In my experience too, if you're doing poorly, lots of times you might not have the greatest team dynamics and in my mind, I know that playing is fine but winning is fine too. So, if you're not winning, you might not perceive it as [a] fun activity anyways so, being injured isn't gonna be as devastating. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

Of course, this depends on the person. Some athletes may still be disappointed by their injury because they are unable to participate in the remaining games of the season. For example:

It might be easier to take simply because maybe you're not going to make the playoffs. So, it's not a big deal in terms of the team but of course, for yourself, you know the only reason you're there is to play so it's still very hard. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Another variable that may change the athlete's view is the possibility of success. If the athlete perceives that the team has a chance of making playoffs even if it is not the strongest team

in the league, he/she may feel more negatively about his/her injury because he/she can't contribute to the team and help the team make playoffs:

...in a situation where we're competing for last place in the playoffs and then I'm gone then I'd feel I have no part on whether or not my team makes the playoffs or not, I'm not an integral part of the team anymore. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

If the team is doing poorly in the end-season before the injury, the athlete may not be motivated to recover and will not rush recovery to return. As this participant explains:

"...if there's no point of playing out the rest of the end-season then who cares about your injury, what's the point of rushing back?". (Abby, 22, varsity player)

In **post-season**, if the team is performing poorly before the athlete is injured, the athlete doesn't experience the same level of negative emotions as he/she might if the team was performing well because he/she knows that the team has no chance of winning a game in the playoffs let alone the championship game:

If your team hadn't been doing well all season and it just squeaked into the playoffs, I think feeling like you're in contention definitely plays a role and if you don't feel like you are then maybe you wouldn't be as upset because you'd played a whole season. You know you're only going to have a couple of games in the playoffs anyway so as much as you want to play in the last game, it would definitely be way worse to feel like you were going to make it to the final game and then potentially win the season. I think that if say 6 out of 10 teams make it to the playoffs and you're the sixth team then you appreciate more having the extra couple of games whereas, you could have been in seventh place and wouldn't have had that game anyway. It's a horrible thing to say but you know you're not going to win. Generally that doesn't happen. So, it's kinda like a few bonus games but really not leading up to anything. Whereas, if you finish in first or second place, you know you're probably going to make it to finals and you could potentially win the whole thing. I've seen that. I've been on both sides of the coin and that's the general attitude that teams tend to have if they think that they're not going to actually win the playoffs anyway. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

...I'd be a little bit more disappointed if we were making a run and if we were winning and then I got injured opposed to, if we were losing. [If] we only have a few games left and they're pretty much just friendship games and then I get injured, I'd say it'd be a little bit more frustrating getting injured if you're actually making a

winning run as opposed to a losing run. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

For athletes on losing teams, the team knows that winning playoffs is unrealistic.

Consequently, athletes injured at this time are also not as concerned about the injury because they know that it doesn't jeopardize any team goals:

"...that goes back to the team's goals, if you were expecting to be dumped in the first round and you couldn't play in that game, it wouldn't be as frustrating...".  
(Peter, 26, recreational player)

Some athletes may even be relieved by an injury at this time if the team is performing poorly because it allows them to rest and end a very long season. This athlete admits:

...I think it would be more devastating but at the same time and it depends on how you're doing in the post-season...if you know that you're done for the season...then that could be really, really crushing but at the same time, it could almost be a relief too because it is such a long season. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

There is not a lot of importance placed on the playoff games if the team is performing poorly before the injury. Still, as this quotation reveals, an injury prevents the athlete from experiencing the joy of participating in a sport he/she loves:

By even half way mid-season near the end of the season, if you're not doing well then you're pretty much not in the playoffs so it's just for fun then but even then, getting injured kind of takes away from the fun. It's just one more of those things that goes wrong. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Lack of success during injury. If the team begins to do poorly in the **mid-season** while the athlete is on the bench due to an injury, the athlete may start to worry about the team's ranking in the playoffs and what teams it will have to face based on its record in the season. The player may feel guilty that the team is losing because he/she could contribute to the team and help them perform better if he/she wasn't injured. These athletes may believe that they have let the team down:

...if they start losing then there's that feeling of letting them down and I mean, most people don't blame people for being hurt but I think, sometimes, you can feel that you are letting someone down, like, it's, they're disappointed in you because of it. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

If the athlete believes the mid-season is unimportant, however, he/she may not be concerned if the team is doing poorly and he/she is out with an injury. Some athletes are not upset if the team loses when they are injured because exhibition games aren't important:

Mid-season is like the pre-season or at least that's the way I see it. I really don't understand most of the guys because it's a lot different... people take games in general really serious but I know that this is exhibition and if we lose, we lose so it doesn't matter to me. Once we get to conference that's when you lose and it's a different feeling, some people might not say that but to me exhibition is just going out and getting exercise and having fun playing the game. I'm not too concerned with winning or losing in the mid-season. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

Similarly, other athletes may not be relieved if they are injured in mid-season because if the team is performing poorly the athlete may be able to use the injury as an excuse for the team's failure on the court:

...I don't think it would affect me as much because of how I just explained that when you're losing other people don't really take much notice and sometimes it's frustrating to struggle so, you could say, use that almost as an excuse. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

Depending on how the team's losing streak is viewed, athletes may want to speed up the recovery time and return to sport as soon as possible to help the team or they may not be motivated because it wouldn't be as fun to play basketball when the team is losing. The following quotations illustrate the impact that athletes' perception of the team's poor performance has on their rehabilitation:

"I think if they were doing poorly, you would want to speed up the process and get back in there to help your team win. There would be more of a concern". (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

**"but if you're losing, you'd want to be out there to make them better but at the same time, you could also say it wouldn't be as good of a time out there anyways". (Ted, 20, varsity player)**

**In end-season, athletes used words including badly, mad, huge, guilt, beyond disappointment, letting team down, much more/extremely frustrating, responsible, let down, and upset to describe how they would feel if the team started to lose while they were sidelined due to injury. One reason for these feelings is if the team performs poorly it may not make it to post-season. Therefore, an injury at this time may jeopardize the team's the chance to make the playoffs:**

**If they were doing poorly and playoffs are in doubt then it's really a nail to the heart, it really hurts you and if they were still doing good then you feel...bad but if they're still doing good in the end-season, at least you know that you have a chance for the post-season and you have a chance to make up for not being able to contribute to the end-season. (Barry, 25, recreational player)**

**Whether or not the team is able to perform well without the injured player depends on the player's position. If it is a key player, the team may not be able to perform well without his/her contribution in the actual games. As a result the team's goals may be affected because the team's record may be affected and the team may not be able to qualify for playoffs. As these athletes explained:**

**If your team is doing poorly...depending if you are a starter, you'd feel helpless like you can't do anything about it and you were so set on maybe being in that last game even though you haven't won all season and you're still trying to do your best and then you hurt yourself and you kind of end your year with having a really bad season and not the way you want to end. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)**

**...the goals for the end-season is to come out with the best record and if you get injured in the end-season and you drop a few games, you're definitely not reaching for your goals. (Barry, 25, recreational player)**

**This may frustrate the athlete because he/she knows he/she could contribute if he/she**

wasn't injured. For example:

If we were losing, I'd feel like I could help the team win and if I can't play I'd feel like I'm letting down my team even though there's nothing I can do about it, I hurt myself but I'd still feel like I'm letting down my team because they're out there trying as hard as they can, they're losing and I feel that I can help them win but I'm sitting on the bench not doing anything about it. [It would] be awful. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

If the team does poorly in the **post-season** that is the end of the year, their chances are no longer affected - they are out of the playoffs. Therefore, if an athlete is injured and the team performs poorly following the injury, the athlete may feel responsible for the team's loss. He/she will not be able to come back and help the team out because the year is finished:

...because if you're injured and can't play and because you can't play, the team loses then the season's over but if you're injured at any other time of year, you have time to recover and come back to help the team but at that time of year, an injury could mean the difference between winning the championship and losing the second round. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

Even, I'd say in the post-season, if they were doing poorly, like, especially, the first game of the playoffs and they weren't doing that well, it would probably affect you a lot if you were hurt because you think you could have been out there and done something to help it, to bring the team together and you're out. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

### Team Involvement

#### Participation

In each season, injured athletes' emotional reaction to the onset of sport injury is influenced by the extent they are able to actively participate in the sport of basketball. Athletes' capacity to participate, of course, is linked directly to his/her injury status, the length of the season, and the amount of time remaining in the year.

If an athlete is injured in **pre-season**, he/she may or may not be concerned about the possibility of sitting on the bench for the season. The athlete's emotional reaction depends on the

perceived importance of that season. In pre-season, many athletes want to be able to participate to the best of their ability because tryouts, physical/skill training, and team building occur at this time. Pre-season also is an opportunity for many players to advance their playing and leadership status on the team and meet the personal goals they have set out to accomplish in that particular season (see importance and personal goals for quotations). If an athlete is unable to do this due to an injury, he/she will experience negative emotions including frustration, annoyance, irritation, and disappointment.

Due to the fact that the athlete is unable to participate in the pre-season, when he/she returns the other teammates may feel some animosity towards the player if he/she is automatically placed into a starting position. Team members may resent the injured player because he/she has not put in the same amount of time and effort as the other players have had to. For this reason, it is important for the injured player to remain an active member of the team. Even if they can not participate on the court, they can go to team meetings, attend practices and/or participate in any capacity that the injury allows:

Injured in the pre-season. I guess, the biggest problem would be the fact that I wouldn't be with my other teammates because we do the same drills and you have that unity, where you do all the same things and if someone was out for a month and then they joined back in, they'd think, 'well, he didn't do half the work or hard work or try as hard'. So, there might be some animosity between the players.  
(Doug, 24, recreational player)

...if you have a starting position and you're out, someone else has to take your spot. So, then it's the whole thing, when you come back you have to prove that you deserve your spot again and then that person might be upset because they've been working hard and whatever, where and you haven't been there so, you haven't put your time in and then if you come back and take their spot that's going to cause [problems]...if you get injured and you still come to practice and you still come to team meetings, they're not going to be as upset than if you get injured and never show up until you're ready to play again because the whole dedication to the team thing and we our put our time in so, you should too and that whole thing plays a big

part in that. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

"I'd still go to practice even though, I'm not practising myself, maybe help run drills or pass balls...". (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Although the games in **mid-season** are only exhibition and are not important in terms of getting to the playoffs and/or winning a championship, many athletes feel that it is important for them to be able to participate in mid-season. An injury will prevent them from being involved in all of the different activities that are the basis of this season. Mid-season is an opportunity to further one's status on the team, gain experience in game situations, improve physical training, learn new strategy, strengthen team cohesion, travel, play games, and establish a record (see importance for quotations). The personal goals of the athlete and even the team goals of winning and establishing a good record may be jeopardized by an injury in mid-season because the player can't participate (see goals for examples). For these reasons many athletes will feel frustrated, disappointed, mad, upset, distraught, and left out if they are forced to stay out of sport during the mid-season because they are injured.

To be injured in **end-season** and not be able to participate leads to negative emotions such as frustration, disappointment, anger, and devastation. Athletes will be upset and 'let down' if they can not play basketball at this time because end-season is a time for players to establish a good reputation for themselves and the team, qualify for playoffs, improve their record so they do not have to face challenging teams in the post-season, realize personal goals, and make the team goal of post-season a reality (see importance and goals for quotations).

Athletes also want to be able to play against rival teams in the end-season. They want the opportunity to beat these teams and if they are unable to participate they will be frustrated:

"I think that some games are bigger than others, if there's one team that you have a

rivalry with it, I think it would be more frustrating not being able to play in that game". (Claire, 23, recreational player)

In addition, many athletes feel like they are left behind if they can not participate in end-season games. If an athlete is required to sit on the bench for the season due to injury, he/she may not feel like a part of the team. As this athlete explains:

Near the end of the season if you're in a playoff run or you're just trying to make playoffs or whatever and you get injured then you feel like 'I'm not part of the momentum going into the playoffs'...it'd be really frustrating because you can't be part of that excitement like, the momentum, you can't be part of that, and when you're taken out of it, it's kind of you get dropped off of the momentum bus, you come off because of your injury... (Brad, 22, recreational player)

These feelings may drive the athlete to participate in the end-season despite his/her injury. Many athletes admitted that they would contemplate playing through the injury at this time unless they physically could not:

"I'd be extremely frustrated and more than likely, would try to play through it if possible and if I couldn't then I'd be very annoyed and just wish the team all the best". (Terry, 22, varsity player)

In **post-season**, athletes' desire to participate in basketball is even greater. Although young, non-starters may be relieved not to participate in the playoffs, the majority of athletes want to play during the post-season because they are very close to achieving the team's long-term goal of winning a championship title (see importance and goals for examples). Many athletes realize that it is a very rare opportunity to be involved in post-season play and they want to be a part of the team's success. If the athlete is injured, however, he/she does not get to experience these feelings because they have not participated. Athletes injured in post-season feel more like a spectator than a member of the team. Words like most frustrating, horrible, disappointed, pissed, really upset, devastated, emptiness, sad, very bad, angry, let down, mad, and emotionally very hard were used

by athletes to describe how they would feel in this situation:

This is what everybody wants to be part of because not everybody gets to make playoffs so, even to be a part of that team, even if you just get in for a couple minutes is really important, especially now. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

...it would be frustrating if your goal is to play in the championship game and you got so close and now you can't then that would make you feel horrible and what I said before too, about the team and letting them down and all the kind of guilty feelings that come along with that. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

...if you get injured everybody looks up to you and it's really devastating for the person because you wanted to take the gold medal game and then all of the sudden you can't and you have to be a spectator and it's a really quick change from playing the whole game to not playing at all and not even being in uniform and sitting on the bench. So, it's pretty devastating. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Again, because the season is so important athletes may disregard their injury and play through just to be able to participate. They realize that the year is finished if the team loses and if that happens the injured athlete may miss his/her only chance to win a championship title:

"...it would probably be better to have it in the post-season because you'd be more likely to just forget about it, play through it cause' that's it". (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

Contribution. Although many athletes may feel negative about the injury experience because they are can't participate in basketball, these feelings are amplified if the athlete believes that the team may be affected because he/she can't contribute to it's welfare. In **pre-season**, for instance, most athletes would be missed if they were injured. Starters contribute to the team by providing leadership and non-starters are needed to support the starters in game situations and in practice (see status for quotations).

Athletes' perceptions of their contribution to the team may affect their behaviour in rehabilitation. Some athletes may even play through their injuries if they believe that their contribution to the team is important. Other athletes may not be as concerned by an injury in

pre-season because they know that they will be able to contribute to the team in the upcoming seasons. For example:

...if you have high expectations of the season, I found players try to hide their injuries or they try to do as much as they can to get over it just so they can get in there and attribute but once they're on the court you can kind of tell that they're injured because they're kind of holding back and they're favouring their injuries and in that case, I'd rather just see a player wait and take his time off and actually get fully proof rated before they actually came back. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

I would hope I'm up to a hundred percent when the games start but if I'm not, I know I'll soon be there enough as to contribute to the team for the rest of the season. If I miss a couple games, in the exhibition games then it's still okay as long as I know that I can contribute to the team in a larger way for the rest of the season. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

Pre-season is early in the year. The athlete has a long time to rehabilitate and get back into sport. In the meantime, another member of the team will have the opportunity to learn the injured player's position. In this situation, the athlete's injury actually contributes to strengthening the team because the other player can be used in a back up situation. As long as the athlete doesn't fear that he/she will lose his/her spot to the replacement, he/she is likely to feel more positive about an injury in pre-season:

...if I were the key member on the team and I got injured in the pre-season, in a way, it would open up for other people to show what they could do and for me, I think, 'well, that's good and you're at least finding someone, we have someone who can back up if I have a bad game or whatever' but in another way, I'd be kind of worried because that possible person who is getting the chance to prove themselves may be way better and even when I do come back from the injury and who knows if I'll be one hundred percent and the coach could choose them over me and then I would lose my spot. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

In **mid-season**, it is frustrating for any player to be injured because if he/she believes that he/she contributes a lot to the team the athlete may feel like he/she could have help the team out if he/she wasn't injured:

So, it's really frustrating to sit on the sidelines and just see either your team playing level diminish or not advance because of my injury and the contribution that I could make and knowing that, knowing exactly what we have to do to achieve our goals. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

Starters and non-starters may feel this way. Although they contribute to the team in different ways, they may feel that their involvement is crucial to the team's success. The ability, skill, and leadership of the starter may be a deciding factor in whether the team wins or loses while the non-starters' support is needed to help the starters in practice and takeover for them in game situations (see status for quotations).

In mid-season, however, injured athletes can contribute to the team in other ways. They can analyze opponents/provide feedback to team, give other players a chance to develop skills/abilities in game situations, and offer moral support by cheering the team on. This may help injured athletes look at the injury situation more positively:

If I'm out for a week, it'd still be alright and actually I might, sitting on the bench and watching, you get to see a lot more of what's happening and you get to see how your team would play without the degree that an injured player normally puts in. So, it's also constructive in a way. You can see more off court how your team is playing. So, you can also give them a little advice on how they're playing, on what to do. As long as it's, I would say, a week. It's not too bad at all, a little disappointing but also maybe a little bit constructive. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

If I was a really nice guy and I wanted to help my other teammates and crew by letting them take my position...I would be happy that somebody would be getting a chance to play for the team. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

...I would say feeling a bit of guilt, probably a bit more just because it's half way through the season so you're not there to support your team and you're sitting on the bench and not even in uniform and you just feel so useless like you want to be out there but you can't. So, basically all you can do is cheer. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Athletes know exactly how much they contribute to the team by the **end-season**. If the

player contributes a lot to the team and is injured, he/she may feel more negative about the injury because if he/she is unable to participate it may affect the team's success:

**This would be a very frustrating because you're getting right to the end of the year, you know how much you're playing, how much you're contributing, what your team expects of you and to have that taken away is very hard. (Janet, 22, varsity player)**

Once again, both starters and non-starters contribute to the team's success in end-season, however, the contribution of the starters may be perceived as greater because of their skill, talent, and leadership role (see status for quotations).

If the team is able to move on to the post-season and the athlete is unable to contribute to end-season success he/she may not feel like he/she should participate in playoffs. One athlete felt that he/she wouldn't deserve to participate in post-season play if he/she was injured in end-season and didn't help the team qualify:

**...getting to the playoffs, those games are important and if you don't, if you're not there to contribute to go to the playoffs then perhaps you might get the feeling that perhaps you shouldn't even be in the playoffs if you didn't help get there. (Doug, 24, recreational player)**

Other athletes who were interviewed felt that although they may not be able to contribute to the team on the court, they could still support the team from the sidelines by analyzing the competition and cheering the team on:

**"I mean, you'd definitely be more supportive for your team because you couldn't be there in terms of playing but you would want to support your team more, I think...". (Janet, 22, varsity player)**

**The end-season is a time where I think you could definitely help your team even if you're not on the court. If you've gotten to know how the other team plays then you can definitely be an asset off the court just as far as watching their plays, when they call one out, being able to tell your team what they're going to do. Obviously, I'd rather be playing... (Claire, 23, recreational player)**

**"...you could always be there on the sidelines, cheering but you'd rather be playing".**

**(Diane, 19, varsity player)**

**In the post-season, injured athletes may not feel like important members of the team if they can't contribute to the team on the court. It is important for athletes to actively participate in the playoff games otherwise they don't feel like they are a part of the team's success because they didn't contribute to it. Athletes said that they would feel worthless, useless, stressed, increasingly frustrating, disappointed, helplessness, upset, angry, and discouraged if they couldn't contribute to the team in the post-season. These quotations reveal why:**

**...if it's something that's gonna knock you out for a week or just enough that you can't play the rest of the games, that's horrible because you're there already if the injury happened and you're gonna have to sit on the bench and watch and you're like the water boy which, is horrible especially, if you've been with the team up until that point. That's hard. It'd be hard to swallow. (Doug, 24, recreational player)**

**It's like all of the guys that get a Super Bowl ring after not even having played a single second in the game. You have the ring but big deal you didn't participate in it and I know that if that's your situation in basketball even if you're there for all of the practises and you're helping your team practice, you can be told that they wouldn't be there without you in the practises but I don't think it's the same. I think you have to be in the game to really appreciate it. (Claire, 23, recreational player)**

**At this time, however, injured athletes are likely to set aside their negative emotions about the injury to contribute to the team by supporting fellow teammates in any way possible. Many athletes noted that post-season is dedicated to the team and not the individual:**

**I couldn't think of anyone that wouldn't realize the importance of the post-season and I think it's gonna make you want to cheer and be supportive for your team and worry about yourself afterwards because it's something your team has been working together for so long to do, to be successful at...you're gonna be upset and angry and frustrated but the post-season is a time for the team. (Janet, 22, varsity player)**

**Winning is paramount in the post-season. The team must perform well to move on to the finals of the championship. As a result, the more playing time the injured athlete receives, the more negative he/she will feel about the injury because the team may lose games without his/her**

contribution (see status for quotations).

**Personal investment.** Athletes make many sacrifices in their personal life to play basketball at the best of their ability. They dedicate a great deal of time and effort in the quest for athletic excellence and as the year progresses, they work even harder to reach the ultimate goal of winning a championship title. It is not surprising then that athletes reported increasingly negative reactions to the onset of sport injury from pre to post-season.

An injury in **pre-season** is upsetting for many athletes because they have worked very hard during the off-season to be prepared for training in pre-season. Athletes worry that they will lose what they have gained in off-season in terms of physical training:

**It'd be frustrating, I think because a lot of us work pretty hard over the summer to be prepared and everyone's pretty gung-ho and excited to be back together again and working and that be frustrating because you'd feel like you lost a lot of what you did over the summer... (Colleen, 22, varsity player)**

**I think I'd probably be upset because in the summer, prior to pre-season, that's what decides the good players from the weak players and I'd probably worked really hard and if I come out in the pre-season and injure myself, you know, I'd probably hurt emotionally but I guess, it'd just be a test to see how strong I really am to come back. (Andrew, 22, varsity player)**

If an athlete is injured in **mid-season** it is frustrating because they have endured the rigours of pre-season training and feel that they deserve to play in mid-season games because they have worked so hard. Again, players are concerned they will lose what they have gained in pre-season training if they are forced to sit out with an injury. To quote:

**I think the frustration would probably be at the same level especially if I played the pre-season and I was all ready to go and exhibition games started and I couldn't play for what had been built up. I know the pre-season's great, the whole team cohesion thing but you do want to play games. So I think that would be the most frustrating part of being injured in the pre-season, is not being able to actually do what you've been working up to. (Claire, 23, recreational player)**

"...I think it'd effect my goals because I'd rather be playing and I've trained for it and I feel like I've earned to play...". (Doug, 24, recreational player)

"...you'd want to be frustrated because you've worked so hard to get to that level and then you just fall back down to the level that you were before". (Ted, 20, varsity player)

The year is almost over by **end-season**. Therefore, an injury at this point in the season, is perceived very negatively by athletes because they have invested so much time and energy training to play in these games:

The end-season that sucks because those are the games you've been training and you've been playing all these exhibition games to play in those games. If you're injured during those then basically, not you've wasted your whole, the beginning part it, of that's what you've trained to play in and it sucks not to be in them. (Fred, 22, varsity player)

I'd probably take it a lot worse than the pre-season because you're involved already, you've gotten to practice with your friends, well, your teammates and you're getting right into the nitty-gritty, playing the other teams and seeing how they play and so, I'd probably be a lot more upset having put so much time and energy and then not being able to play for a month or however long the injury is. (Vikki, recreational player)

Athletes injured in end-season are also frustrated and angry because the team has worked hard all year to develop plays and strategies to implement against certain teams. If the athlete is injured he/she may not get the opportunity to experience the satisfaction of seeing the hard work in practice/mid-season pay off:

I guess in the end-season a lot of the games are more intense just because you've played each other before and you go out knowing what to expect. Also, you probably have plays that you've planned to play against specific teams because you know that works and it's really satisfying to see those plays work, to actually experience that... (Claire, 23, recreational player)

In **post-season**, athletes have gone through the entire year, working and playing hard to make it to the playoffs. They have invested a lot of effort and time and would react very negatively

if they were injured and unable to participate in such an important part of the season. This is the ultimate goal and if the athlete is injured and can not participate he/she will be very upset and disappointed:

I think then you'd be the most negative feeling because it would seem like the whole year was like, pretty much wasted because you've built up, you've worked to this one point and then it all stops and then it seems you worked all that time to get to that part and it's pretty much wasted . (Ted, 20, varsity player)

I don't know if I'd cry on the bench but I know I would let myself down, a big feeling of emptiness because you're not there with the team anymore and they're having the greatest time of their life if they're playing in the end or in the post-season, in the playoffs and you're not there and you've helped them get there, you've done it all for shit...you'd be feeling pretty bad, very bad. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Athletes may be more likely to play through the injury unless it is physically impossible because they have invested so much into the season and really want to be able to play at this time:

So, if I sprained my ankle and I knew I was going to be back within a couple of days or if I did another one and I wasn't so sure but it wasn't a broken arm or something, jammed a finger and I wasn't sure how long I was going to be out I'd play anyway. It's the post-season, it's what you worked for, you need to play . (Fred, 22, varsity player)

### Goals

An injury at any time of the year may affect athletes' personal and team goals. While an injury may impact some goals more than others during the different times of the year, any time an athlete perceives that he/she will be unable to fulfill their goals he/she is likely to react negatively to the injury situation.

#### Personal Goals

Athletes felt that if they were injured in the **pre-season**, their personal goals would be affected more than the team's goals. Specifically, injured athletes can't practise with the team

during training camp and therefore, may not make the team if they are injured. If the athlete isn't concerned with making the cut, he/she will not be able to achieve the level of conditioning, strength, and skill needed to move up to a starter position and/or receive more playing time in the mid-season. For these reasons athletes who can not meet their personal goals in pre-season because are hurt may feel frustrated, disappointed, really angry, very annoyed, and upset:

...if you had a goal to be a better player or to become a starter that year then being off for a month would really affect you because you wouldn't be practising or doing anything. So, you're physique would just go down. (Diane, 19, varsity player)

...I usually have a weight goal that I like to come into training camp, I like to be a little bit heavier, a little bit stronger...and when you're injured, it's hard to make progress...especially if you have a foot injury and you're trying to increase your vertical. Things like that are very frustrating. So, [the injury would] definitely affect your goals depending on the stature of your injury...[it] will affect what you're going to achieve skill wise or when you're trying to get connected to your teammates or trying to be in shape. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

Still, at this point in the season, the injured athlete may be less devastated about an injury because the whole year lies ahead. The athlete knows that he/she still has a chance to meet his/her goals. For example:

"...if you were just out for that one month you'd still be capable of reaching them...".  
(Colleen, 22, varsity player)

Again, depending on the athlete's injury status, personal goals such as playing and conditioning levels are affected in **mid-season** as the team begins to play exhibition games. In contrast to pre-season, however, personal goals like improving as a player by increasing playing time and improving rebounding and scoring stats and decreasing turnovers and opponent leads are no longer achievable if the athlete is injured at this time. Participants said they would be discouraged, irritated, super-frustrated, and disappointed if they couldn't realize these goals:

It would be disappointing because if you were injured for say, a month and you

came back then you would just be that many steps behind the team. You'd have to work yourself up again and try to get into shape and just to keep up with everybody. So, I think it would be hard. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

...lots of people set different goals but personally, I would usually set goals like to try to take an offensive charge every game...that would help our team goal which, essentially is to win but more likely, it's to keep opponents under 70 points or to out rebound them or to have less turnovers than them and so, to be injured, it would be frustrating because you wouldn't be taking that charge every game because you're not even in the game...if you're one of the top rebounders then it's less likely that your team is going to out rebound the other team which, in my opinion, is a huge factor in whether you win or lose a game. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

...as an individual, maybe you're not going to get as many points or as many minutes as you were hoping...or maybe you're not going to get the all-star of the tournament...but in the long-term, I don't think that has a big effect because the mid-season isn't what's important. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Especially if your goals are to get into the games...because if you're goal is to work up to playing 15/20 minutes a game and you're out during the mid-season and you've got to work yourself up to that and you might not get there by the end of the year. Therefore, you're goal is not achieved...for the pre-season it was more getting into shape and meshing with the team but I think this is more your goals of playing time and improving as a player like on the floor or being a scorer... (Julie, 20, varsity player)

However, the injured athlete can look forward to achieving his/her goals in the seasons ahead This may motivate the athlete recover quickly and properly to get back into the game:

...I think that I would still see that chance to still improve just as much, to have a strong second half of the season...It would make me feel like the season was still worthwhile, it wasn't at a loss for me. It would make me probably feel confident in myself just knowing I still have that time, I don't have to rush myself. I have the time to get my body use to it again and still play and improve. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

In **end-season**, however, there is little time remaining in the year and depending on the athlete's injury status, he/she may or may not be able to return to sport to achieve his/her goals. If the athlete believes that he/she has enough time to recover and achieve his/her goals he/she is less negative about the injury than if he/she feels that the season is almost finished:

So, you're basically gonna be out for almost the rest of the season so, and even if you're out for a month and you do come back for the last few games, you're never gonna feel like you're with it or and you know you're not going to be playing as good as you could have played if you had of been there. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

I think it all depends on whether I'm coming back or not...if I'm coming back and it's the end-season, I'm obviously going to work hard, just dig in, just come back hopefully...if I was out for a month in the end-season but I was going to come back, I think my goals would still be there and it would affect them a little bit because I missed [the] important part of the season but essentially, I don't think it would. (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

If the athlete is unable to recover from the injury in enough time to make an impact on the court, individual goals such as improving points and assists, status, gaining additional playing time, and/or making a name for the player/university may be affected:

"...at this point, you're still working for your individual goals, maybe, points or assists...". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

...you might have a goal to score this many points in a year and you can't play so therefore you can't reach those kinds of goals. So, that will affect your goals and if you're not as big a role on the team, maybe your goal was to get 5 minutes playing time in the last big important game and if you're injured you can't do that. So, I think it'd definitely affect your goals. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

...I'm trying to make a name for myself and [for this] University so we can get respect around the league and I'm not going to get that respect if I'm out for the whole season and we lose again... (Andrew, 22, varsity player)

More importantly, the team's goals of making the playoffs and establishing a good record for the playoff round may be affected. This is very upsetting, disturbing, and stressful to the athlete because all of their personal goals are tied to the team goals in the end-season:

...my goals would be to get in the playoffs and if I were injured for a month... [and] I don't get back into shape or I don't get over this injury quick enough then I'll miss everything I tried to work for. So, it would affect my goals... (Brad, 22, recreational player)

"Personal goals, pretty much the same thing. You want to help contribute to a great

record and I guess, getting injured would kind of defeat a personal goal". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

In the **post-season**, the athlete is entirely focused on the team rather than his/her personal goals. Whatever personal goals he/she may have are directed toward the team goal of winning games to ultimately win the championship. Most personal goals have been met by this point in the season. The only individual goal the athlete may strive for is MVP of the championship/all-star:

...you can't really have an effect on your personal goals during the post-season because post-season are all team oriented goals, like how far you want to get and what kind of things you want to do. Whenever somebody goes into a championship game, obviously the goal to do is to win that championship game for your team. You don't go into the game saying 'okay, I want to score 30 points this game', that's probably just being selfish. So, I'd say it wouldn't have an effect on personal goals at all. It [would] have an effect on team goals. (Jack, 23, varsity player)

I mean if you're just there for fun and you don't care about winning then I think your injury is going to have the same effect on you as it would at any point in the season but if you start off the season on the very first day you say 'I want to win the final game' then it will have a huge effect on you. It would have a negative effect because...for the whole season...if that has been you're number one goal...you can still see your team win but it's not the same. (Claire, 23, recreational player)

"As an individual, if you were looking for an all-star...you can't really do that when you're not participating...". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

### Team Goals

If an athlete is injured in **pre-season**, it is unlikely that team goals will be affected because the games have yet to start and the team can replace the injured player if necessary. The team has the entire year ahead to achieve its goals:

I think the team goals wouldn't change because...it's an injury in the pre-season, the team still has numerous games to play so the team goals would still be set, it wouldn't change and I would just have to get back into the mix. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

"It could possibly affect the individual goals but not the team because the team will always go on, they'll just find another person to take the spot...". (Diane, 19, varsity)

player)

In **mid-season**, however, if the injured athlete is a starting player, team goals will be affected. At this time of the season, the team is concerned with maintaining a good record and entering end-season on a good note. If the team is missing a key player it may be unable to realize these goals. Of course, mid-season is still early in the year and the team may have other opportunities to meet these goals. An injury in mid-season is not a major set back and therefore, some athletes may not be as let down by the situation:

"...depending on how long the season is but you still have time, after the half way point...to do the same things...as a team". (Rob, 23, recreational player)

This is not the case in the **end-season**. If a player who contributes a great deal to the team is injured in end-season, the probability of the team successfully achieving its goals are diminished. Although the team may not change its goals, they may devise new strategies to achieve them. It is much more challenging to attain goals, such as winning games to achieve a good record and to make the playoffs, if the injured player is a major contributor to the team's success:

...at the end of the season, it's obviously affects my goals because then the season would probably be over after that and team goals...would remain the same but...the planning on achieving them would be different. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

"...realistically it's gonna be much more of a challenge for you to do what you wanted to do. So, their goals might be affected". (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

...with our team...I don't think we have any one player that sticks out that much but...if one of your major offensive players is out that's gonna affect your score or if one of your best defensive players is out, that's definitely gonna affect your goal as to how many points that you want your opponents to score but hopefully, people can pick up the slack but depending on who the player is, it's hard...if they were pretty significant. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

In **post-season**, team goals are more important than personal goals and any personal goals the athlete may have are directed toward the team goal. Again, if a key player is injured at this time

the team will not change its goal of winning the playoffs but they may not realistically be able to achieve that goal without the injured player. To quote:

...if you play a big part of the team then [the team isn't] going to say 'we'll only try to come in second', they're still going to try and come in first but it might ultimately change what's going on. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

At that time of year, personal goals are pretty much all directed towards team goals...it's all team goals at that time of year, post-season, it's all about winning and going on. So, it'd affect the team goals. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

Another team goal may be to have all players healthy and able to contribute to post-season success. If a player is injured this goal can't be met:

"...a team goal would be hoping to have every single person healthy and contribute when the title was won...". (Barry, 25, recreational player)

### Social Influences

Injured athletes do not always receive support from the people closest to them. When athletes are injured at different times of the season, coaches, teammates, family, friends, and fans do not always look at the situation positively. In many instances, the sources athletes turn to for support are negative about the injury and openly express their feelings to the injured player. These reactions in turn, affect the injured athlete's appraisal of the injury and his/her emotional and behavioural response.

### Coach

**Pre-season** is devoted to preparing the team for exhibition games. Therefore, if a player is injured at this time the coach may worry that the player will not be able to play up to his/her ability in mid-season games. In addition, positions are still being defined in pre-season and the coach may fear that the dynamics of the team may be affected because the player is unable to participate in pre-season training. If the coach is concerned about the athlete's injury the athlete may feel even

more negative about the injury and worry that he/she will be cut from the team:

He knows I contribute a lot to the team, especially doing so well last year...So, he'd be a little bit disappointed, maybe a little a bit worried but, he might try to find another recruit but in the pre-season, it wouldn't be too bad...It might add a little bit to the frustration but I would say that my own disappointment far out weights any others. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...as a coach you see the people that you need to make it happen and there's different pieces for every puzzle...there's the boarder pieces that hold it together which may be our starting five but then there's all the stuff in the middle and so, every person on the team plays an important role and as soon as one person gets injured, I think it throws off the dynamics of the whole group... (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

If the coach is supportive of the athlete at this time, however, the athlete may be able to deal with the negative feelings he/she is experiencing as a result of the injury. Most athletes felt that the coach would support them in pre-season because it is not viewed as important as the upcoming seasons and games have yet to begin. Therefore, the coach may encourage the injured athlete to rehabilitate the injury so he/she can play in mid-season:

It would show you that they cared and that they wanted you on the team and that they were just as excited to have you back as you are to be back and it makes you feel a lot better and just like anything, if you're feeling positive and good about things in your life then things are a lot easier. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

I think that any time that your teammates and coach are supportive, it helps. If they ignore it...or if you're just sitting on the sidelines and they forget about you, that makes a big difference...that makes you forget why you're there and what you're working for. So, it's really, really important that they support you and be there for you. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

I don't think [the coach] would be pushing you as hard but say if you're in the middle of the season, he'd want you to try and get better quicker instead of in the pre-season, he'd be like 'just take your time and try to get healthy'...that would make you feel better and you wouldn't feel like it's such a major set back and you could deal with it easier... (Ted, 20, varsity player)

A supportive reaction from the coach may motivate the athlete to recover and return to the

sport:

"...the more my teammates and the coach are into me coming back, the more it motivates me to work harder and get back into the game". (Brad, 22, recreational player)

By **mid-season** the team has begun its initial shaping process. As a result, the coach is less likely to worry about how he/she must restructure the dynamics of a team if one of his/her athletes incurs a minor injury at this time. This helps the injured athlete to be more positive about returning to the sport because he/she knows that his/her spot is fairly secure. To quote:

...if it was a short injury, I don't think it would be as detrimental in the coach's eyes because you're already part of the team...you've had your pre-season [and the] coach knows who the starting five is and what role you're gonna play on the team and if he/she thinks you're going to be out for a couple of games...they're not going to worry about re-shuffling the whole organization of the team. I think it's not as big of a deal...if the coach is giving you the vibe that when you come back all will be well then you're not going to be as worried about it. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

In the mid-season, the coach is also less concerned about an injury because the games are not as important as later on in the year. The coach is relieved that the athlete will be able to participate when the games are more intense later on in the year:

I think it's like the pre-season because these games are just exhibition. I think that they would be supportive...and say 'at least we'll have you back in time for when it matters because right now it doesn't matter'. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

Nonetheless, the games have started and the team wants to establish a good record. The coach and teammates may be disappointed by an injury at this time especially if a key player is injured. This reaction does not help the injured player but rather, increases the negative feelings surrounding the injury situation. As this athlete explained:

"...if my coaches or teammates were showing disappointment at this time too...it would affect me as well, it would bring me down a little bit". (Rob, 23, recreational player)

In the **end-season**, the coach may respond negatively to an injury because there is so much pressure on the coach to have a successful team. At this point in the season, the coach has worked hard to develop game plans and match-ups. He/she knows who can perform the best in which position. Therefore, when an athlete is injured at this time it is very frustrating to the coach because he/she must develop a back-up plan quickly to replace the injured player. If an important player is injured, however, the team may not be able to qualify for playoffs. Nonetheless, many athletes noted that it is important for the coach to support the injured athlete at this time because the injured player knows it is an important time of year to be playing basketball and may be devastated that he/she can't participate. Negative reactions from the coach may only arouse feelings of stress and guilt within the injured athlete:

...I do believe the post-season is really, really, important but without the end-season, you can't get there. So, that's the time where you need the support and you need people backing you. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

...at the end of the season, I think coach obviously doesn't want to have any injuries because that's his whole game plan. He might have to change the way he thinks towards future games and playing different players with match-ups. So, that might change the whole strategy... (Ted, 20, varsity player)

Moreover, if the coach reacts negatively, the athlete may believe that the coach does not really care about him/her as person. The injured athlete may feel that the coach is more concerned about the influence the injury might have on the team's success rather than how the situation has affected the athlete. As a result, the athlete may not be motivated to recover and may feel worse about the injury situation. This quotation reveals the impact a coach's reaction to an injury can have on an athlete's emotions and/or behaviour:

...I've had a couple coaches say when I got injured and I don't think it was meant for me to hear this, but they said 'why me', like something had happened to them because I was injured. I suppose I can understand because one of their key players

has been hurt now and they can't help out but at the same time, I felt like, 'it's not you, it's me that's injured and you need to be supporting me'. That's the negative side that I've seen. The positive one is...trying to say 'look forward to next year or work through it'...when they are positive and there for you, it's a lot better than hearing something like that because it made me feel like he didn't care about me... (Janet, 22, varsity athlete)

According to athletes interviewed, the coach should encourage the injured player to return to sport because it may motivate him/her to recover from the injury. However, there must be a clear distinction between encouragement and pressure. If the team is performing poorly and the athlete was contributing a great deal to the team's success before the injury, he/she may feel pressured to return to sport before the injury has fully healed:

...if I were a starting player or pretty important, sixth down on the bench, I think they'd react more, be more motivated, more trying to get me back into it, the motivation that you need around that time to get back into it...Again, I guess it would all go back to how your team is doing...if you're on a bad team...then they're going to be pumped and want you to come back, that will motivate you too but if you're a last place team and you're just like 'awe, you guys, it won't make a difference, we're last anyways'. Again, I think you'd get more motivated by the end-season because the rest of the team, the coach would be like 'oh man, come back, we need you, we just need you back there'. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

In **post-season**, every game is important because if the team loses one game they are out of the playoffs and their season is over. If a player is injured, the coach must make some changes to the team. These adjustments may affect the team's ability to perform at its usual standard. Some athletes felt that the coach would be so angry about the injury situation he/she might take these feelings out on other players. Such a situation may create more negative feelings for the injured player to contend with:

...they would probably be angry and stressed, taking it out on other members, maybe...I'd feel bad because I would feel like it was all my fault...the coach is reacting how they are because I'm the one that's injured, everybody else is getting blamed for it. (Beth, 22, recreational player)

The stress experienced by the coach in the post-season may also cause him/her to pressure the athlete to return before he/she is ready. The athlete may play despite his/her injury because the coach has asked him/her to and he/she does not want to disappoint the coach. This may be an abuse of the fiduciary relationship between athlete and coach because the coach is jeopardizing the athlete's physical health:

For the coach, they're going to rely on you. They look to you to control things out on the floor and help out the team like everyone has their job and if you're not there fulfilling your job then maybe the team won't do as well...[If] the coach is telling me, 'get back out there, we want you, we need you', I would probably because you look up to that person as a leader and you respect them...I would look up to that person and say '...the team needs me, my coach needs me then I can't worry about this injury, deal with the pain and go on with it because you have a duty to your team too'. (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

Although the coach must concentrate on how to compensate for the loss of a player, athletes interviewed felt that the coach should make an effort to talk to the injured athlete because a supportive attitude may help motivate the injured player to recover properly. Moreover, the time the coach takes to offer support to the injured player may influence the player's decision to return to sport the next year:

...if they're a good coach, they're gonna have to take the time console you...I think it's important for coaches [to] let the athlete know 'look, this isn't your fault, we don't blame you and you're still a part of this team'. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

I think sometimes that your coach at that time of year, is really caught up in things. It's the end of the season, they've really, really got to concentrate on your games. Whereas, your teammates and your team captains still have to worry about the team. I think that coaches tend to forget about that a lot in the playoffs and near the end of the year. So, I think that they probably end up playing less of a role, they don't do as much...[and] that can be pretty discouraging...for a player... because you're making decisions on what you want to do next year and what you want to do next summer. So, I think it's important for a coach to be supportive but I don't know if that always happens. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

I think that you'd feel that you'd want to get better, if you're someone who's a big

part of the team but if you're not, you might not be pushed to get better, therefore, just letting the injury heal on itself and not getting it properly looked after, therefore, causing re-occurring injuries. So...I think if that if you could react positively towards everyone and push them, make them feel like they're very important on the team and that would be a lot better than just saying 'they don't really play so, don't really worry about it...'. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

Other players, however, do not expect a great amount of support from their coach and teammates because they know that post-season is such a crucial time of the season. These players may actually prefer it if the team concentrates on how to make up for the loss of the injured player than offering support because the injured player does not want to be an extra burden to the team. The injured player is already feeling guilty that he/she has caused the team so much stress and does not want to be responsible for any more stress on the team:

They'd be worried about the team. I think they'd sort of show less concern for me because at that point I'm not going to play anymore. They have to make adjustments and they would have to be very involved in themselves at that point... if they were going to show less concern then I could understand just knowing that...they [have] an extra burden on them. So, I wouldn't really have all that much to think about my own injury. I'd feel more about the extra slack that the team would have to pick up and that would be my concern... (Rob, 23, recreational player)

### Teammates

In **pre-season**, teammates do not feel that an injury is as detrimental to the team because they are not playing games yet and winning isn't an issue. For instance:

"I don't think that they'd see it too much as a big deal because we're not playing games yet...they'll definitely say 'don't worry about it, you're not missing any games'". (Janet, 22, varsity player)

The injured athlete may be able to cope with the injury experience better if his/her teammates are supportive and he/she is encouraged to return to sport:

"...they'd be trying to motivate you to work hard and get back....that would make you feel better and you wouldn't feel like it's such a major set back and you could

deal with it easier". (Ted, 20, varsity player)

...assuming that I was welcomed back on to the team and everything was okay... I think teammates have an important role in the rehabilitation process. If you know that they're waiting for you to come back and you're going to be welcomed back with open arms then I think it's going to help you to want to get better and get back in there and work hard, you'd feel better about it. If you feel like you're gone, they've replaced you, they don't need you anymore, then what's the point of getting back out there? (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Unfortunately, fellow team members do not always support the injured athlete. Some athletes worry more about the team's ability to succeed in the upcoming year than the athlete's health while other teammates view an injury in pre-season as an opportunity to improve their own status on the team. This creates unnecessary competition between players which could induce animosity among teammates. Such a reaction only serves to amplify the negative feelings the injured athlete is already experiencing (see status for quotations).

In **mid-season**, the reactions of teammates to the athlete's injury are very influential because the athlete devotes so much time to the sport and is constantly with his/her teammates. In general, teammates are supportive of the injured athlete even though they may be disappointed if the team starts performing poorly without the injured player's participation in the exhibition games. Participants felt that this support can be motivating and enhance the injured athlete's attitude during the recovery process. For example:

At this point in time, almost more so than at the rest of the year, you spend so much time with the rest of your team, that I'd place more importance on how they deal with it than your friends and family do...you're obviously going to want people to be concerned with your injury [and] give you a hand or tell you 'get better' but I don't think that's as big of a factor as your teammates and your coach who you see every day...they're the ones that really matter... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

They'd be a little bit more concerned than if I was injured [mid]-season because of the nature of the games that are missed and any games that are missed during the season are important to the team. So, they'd be a little bit disappointed... knowing

that I might be letting my team down in the time of their need would just add to my frustration. So, it would work against me. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...if they start losing then there's that feeling of letting them down...most people don't blame people for being hurt but I think, sometimes, you can feel that you are letting someone down...they're disappointed in you because of it. (Rob, 23, recreational player)

They'd show their support as much as they could. There's not really much they could do. The only thing you can do is have that relationship with your teammates ...be there to stand behind them...as long as they showed support...it'd make me want to come back faster. It'd make me think these guys really care. So, I'd do all I could to get back as fast as I could to benefit them... (Jack, 23, varsity player)

...teammates always try and motivate me but they'd want to get you back because this is where you build your team up and where you start getting to a higher level...I think if it was positive, it would push you to work and get back faster but if it was negative then you'd be just set back and you wouldn't want to come back right away. (Ted, 20, varsity player)

However, if teammates are urging the athlete to return to sport such encouragement may be perceived as pressure:

[The feelings of my teammates] would just be an additional pressure, you'd be pressuring yourself to try and do whatever it takes to get back out there but it would just be that end degree more on your mind. (Peter, 26, recreational player)

In the **end-season**, if the team performs poorly after the player is injured, the reactions of teammates may be very negative. Team members may feel some animosity toward the injured player for being injured and may blame that player for their loss:

...if they were having a great season and I get injured and we start losing games, that'd be disastrous because you have a lot of people looking down on you saying, 'you dumb twit, look what you did, you should have been more careful' type thing and so, there might be animosity...a lot of finger pointing will probably come your way as an excuse to why they may have lost a game... (Doug, 24, recreational player)

I know that they wouldn't be upset with me personally, they'd just be upset at the circumstances because no one likes to offer excuses...[but my teammates would think] 'if we were able to operate on all cylinders, it might have been different.

**That's not a pleasant feeling for anyone to go through...you feel responsible for that but there's nothing you can do... (Peter, 26, recreational player)**

**Still, teammates usually do not have the same amount of pressure on them and are in a better position to empathize with the injured athlete. Sympathy, however, may not help the athlete feel any better:**

**...they'd probably feel a little bit sympathetic, knowing that you really want to contribute in this time of need and there's nothing you can do about it...If they were sympathetic...you would be thankful about that but it really wouldn't help my feelings get any higher about myself because you know that there still might be some worry and you're still letting them down and it would add little bit of grief. (Barry, 25, recreational player)**

**Injured athletes need reassurance that their injury is not going to affect the team detrimentally. The athlete will feel much better about the injury situation if the team does not give up on their goal of making the playoffs. Teammates must also ensure that the athlete knows that he/she will be missed on the court. If the injured athlete perceives that the team will miss the player he/she may feel better about the injury situation and work hard to recover quickly because he/she knows that his/her teammates still think he/she is an important part of the team. Conversely, if the injured athlete does not receive support from his/her teammates, he/she may be less motivated to return to sport quickly:**

**...you have certain people who kind of wish that you're still there playing with them but then you have those other people who see it as an opportunity...It shows that there's people out there who want to see you play and then you have people who want to rise to the occasion, 'one of our team members is down that means...we have to step up an extra notch'... (Doug, 24, recreational player)**

**...at that point in the season, you can still recover in time for the playoffs so, it's almost make it or break it because...you see no reason to come back if they're not supporting you. To me, that would say...they don't want me back, they don't care if I'm back and so...it's disappointing...It'd probably be pretty stressful too...if you're injured and they're like, 'come on, come on, we need you, we need you'...it probably wouldn't help in your injury recovery if you're really stressed... (Abby, 22,**

varsity player)

In **post-season**, teammates may be more supportive because they can identify with what the athlete is experiencing. They understand that this is one of the worst times to be injured because it is such an important time of the year and there is very little time remaining in the season for the injured athlete to return and be a part of a playoff run. For example:

I think your teammates are probably a little more supportive because they realize that your season's over at that point in time...it might just irritate you, like, 'they get to go and play the season'... you might be kind of resentful about it. (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Although, team members may offer the injured player support, they may be disappointed that the player is injured and maybe worried because now they must perform without that player's contribution. This reaction places more negative feelings of guilt on the injured player:

I'd say that they'd be really disappointed and again acknowledging it's not your fault. They're depending on you to be there and they're used to playing with you and if you're not there then you can't blame them for being upset about it. They're not going to hold it against you personally but they will be upset..it would probably increase the guilt... (Claire, 23, recreational player)

Of course, some athletes felt that they would not want the team to take the time to provide support for them if they were injured because post-season is such an important time, these athletes wanted the team to concentrate on how to compensate for the injured player:

They'd be definitely really worried. Distraught is another word that comes to my mind. I don't think they would have more sympathy than in the end-season. I think they would know that they would have to step it up themselves and they'd feel a little bit sympathetic but I think they would be more concentrating on what they would have to do now themselves...I would want them to just concentrate on what they would now without me and I would help them get along... (Barry, 25, recreational player)

...they are gonna have to realize that player is hurt and we're gonna have to move on and use what we have and maybe be there for that person afterwards but at the time, it's got to be about the team because that's why they're there and that's what

you've been working for all year...there's gonna be other people that support you and I think that you just want to be on the sidelines, cheering along with them.  
(Janet, 22, varsity player)

### Family and Friends

During all four seasons, family members and friends are primarily concerned with the athlete's health. They are more interested in the athlete's well-being than the impact the injury has on his/her basketball career. Family and friends want the athlete to rehabilitation properly. Although the injured athlete may consider this advice, it may not influence his/her decision to return to sport because the athlete may not believe that his/her friends and family can identify with the injury experience:

"They would just want you to get better, for your own sake more so than the team's sake....They wouldn't be disappointed that I couldn't play basketball". (Peter, 26, recreational player)

I always take it into consideration, I listen to them but I'm always the one who knows if I'm ready to play or not...So, I'd definitely take it into consideration but the choice is always up to me. (Terry, 22, varsity player)

...my coach and teammates understand and a lot of my friends don't. They have no experience with this sort of thing. So, I don't think [their reactions to my injury] would affect me a lot. (Colleen, 22, varsity player)

Early on in the year, family and friends are not concerned about an injury in basketball.

They may even be happy that the injury allows the athlete to spend more time away from sport:

In the pre-season, family and friends, well, my friends that aren't on the basketball team, I think they'd like it because then I don't spend as much time with the team and my family-they'd want to make sure that my injury recovers well so, as far as missing time practising with the team, that's more of me being upset with myself than my parents or even my friends. So, it's more me letting down the players and my coach more than anything. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

However, if friends and family members do understand the importance of sport to the athlete they are likely to be encouraging and support the athlete by being positive. These reactions

help the athlete to have a positive outlook on the situation and will facilitate rehabilitation:

I guess they'd kind of push me towards getting back in they'd be like "it's not the end of the world". They'd, I think they'd have the same outlook as I would. You know, it's just the pre-season, get back into gear, you've got the rest of the season to deal with, to get you back in. I mean, kind of the same feeling as I would have. (Brad, 22, recreational player)

Only if, yeah, it goes along with the same thing, everybody has something to say and if they're encouraging and saying, you know, not to worry, you're still going to be upset but they're gonna, hopefully, bring you into the frame of mind where you're "okay, it's not really that bad". Whereas, if they say 'oh, too bad you're out for the season' or whatever then you're gonna be more depressed by it or... I think. (Kelly, 23, recreational player)

The main difference between **pre-season** and the later seasons cited by respondents was that family and friends enjoy being able to go to the games and watch the player in action. Consequently, if the player is injured it is disappointing for the family members. This reaction, however, does not seem to affect the injured athlete. The athlete seems to be more concerned about the team's reaction to the injury:

They'd kind of be bummed out because my family and friends come to the games, basically to watch you. They don't know the guys on a personal level like they know you. They do like to see the team successful but in all honesty, they're coming to see and if you're injured and you're not playing a hundred percent or if you're not playing at all, it's obviously going to affect them. Disappointment that you're not being able to do what you can because of your injury...a parent or a friend would want to see you be successful and if your injury dashes that, I think they'd be disappointed. They wouldn't specifically say 'we're disappointed in you' because obviously, they'd say they'd be proud no matter what you do but I think it would disappoint them not being able to see you excel... (Jack, 23, varsity player)

I think that they'd be kind of sad and disappointed because a lot of times my parents come a long distance to watch me play and for them to come watch a game [with] me sitting on the sideline would be disappointing. (Janet, 22, varsity player)

As the year unfolds, however, many athletes reported that they would rely on the support from family and friends more. In the **end** and **post-season**, athletes need a great deal of support

from significant others because the games are very important. If the injured athlete can't participate and help the team qualify for playoffs or win a championship, he/she will feel very negative:

I think they might be a little more important because it's a really big let down at this point in the season if you get injured and so emotionally you might need more support at that point in time. So, I think that they'd probably play a more important role [as] cheerleaders [and in terms of] moral support... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

...family and friends help you think of other things that are going on in your life and are positive instead of this negative injury...[when] they say 'well, you can't do this, so why don't we go here or you can't do this so, why don't we work on this', that helps you get your mind off it so, therefore, you're not being negative all the time [and] if your own feelings are more positive towards life you remember there's something else out there besides basketball. (Julie, 20, varsity player)

Actually, injured athletes may prefer the support of their family by **post-season** because they have spent so much time with the team and they may feel resentful of the fact that they can not participate at such an important time:

...they'd be more important to you than your teammates at that point in time because you might feel a little bit resentful towards them and...I think you're probably pretty appreciative of that especially...because it's the end of the season [and] you've spent so much time with the people on your team [that] you don't want to see them any more... (Abby, 22, varsity player)

Although, this support may help the athlete deal with the injury better and feel more positive, the support of family members may not be as influential as the support the injured athlete receives from the team. Again, injured athletes place more importance on the team's response to the injury:

...if I told them a sob story how I got injured in end-season and might not be able to make playoffs, they might show a little bit more sympathy. Other than that, it really wouldn't matter...It might help a little bit but personally, not really....They'd probably feel a lot more sympathetic because [the team was] getting so close to a title. (Barry, 25, recreational player)

If family members are too sympathetic and do not try to motivate the athlete to get better and return to play, the athlete may feel like they don't really understand the importance of playing in the post-season and may resent the support.

"...if [parents] were too focussed on your health and getting better...after a while, it's the playoffs, I would be a little upset. I would be like 'why aren't you telling me to get out there and play, it doesn't matter?' but I would still want them to be concerned for me to get better".

### Fans

Once exhibition games begin in mid-season, the support of fans influences athletes' appraisal of the injury situation. If the team is performing well in **mid, end, and post-season**, fans are interested in how the team is performing and the team receives a lot of attention. If the athlete is injured, he/she may not feel a part of this:

"...if you're always winning...You want to be part of that excitement and the people being interested. Whereas, if you win some, you lose some, people are just like 'well, that's too bad' and if you're winning all the time...everybody cared, everybody wanted to know how you did on the weekend and you're in the paper...So, if you get injured and it's exciting, you want to keep being a part of it and not that [people aren't] going to talk to you less but they might because you're not as involved".

The injury prevents athletes from being in the spotlight and reaping the external reward for playing well. According to this athlete, he would feel worse about an injury because the support from fans is no longer there:

"...if you were playing really well and you were enjoying the experience of people coming to watch the games and playing in front of lots of people when you get injured you wouldn't have that same feeling...I think it would [affect me the most during the end and post-season] because you've worked your whole season to get there and then you'd hear the fans cheering for the whole team and...you'd feel worse".

### External considerations

Following the onset of sport injury, athletes also consider the impact of external circumstances on the injury situation. These events that occur outside of sport may help athletes view the injury positively or negatively at different times of the season.

#### Positive

Athletes view **pre-season** and **mid-season** as training periods to prepare for later in the year when winning games becomes critical (See importance for quotations). Therefore, if an injury occurs at this time athletes may not be as concerned because these seasons are relatively unimportant. In contrast, to mid and end-season, athletes can afford to take time out of sport to rehabilitate and focus on other areas of their lives. An injury early in the year allows athletes to spend more time with family and friends and to concentrate on schoolwork. This may be viewed as a positive aspect of an injury if it occurs early in the year:

Spend more time with my girlfriend. Try harder in school, academically. Spend more time with my family and friends. Just in the pre-season and perhaps, the mid-season because when it comes down to the end and post-season, that's more important to...to my team members and to myself. (Doug, 24, recreational player)

Although, injuries later in the year are perceived negatively because it is important for athletes to be able to play at this time, some injured athletes may be able to deal with the injury situation better if they view it as an opportunity to concentrate on areas outside of sport. The year is almost over by the **post-season** and therefore, very few athletes will actually be able to return to sport if they are injured. Instead, they can focus on school work and enjoy some free time:

"...if you got injured in the post-season, you could concentrate on school work and you'd get more free time". (Rachel, 19, recreational player)

## Negative

External circumstances may also amplify athletes' negative feelings about the injury situation. The pressure of writing exams in **mid** and **post-season**, for instance, is difficult for many athletes to cope with when they are trying to deal with the negative emotions that are associated with sport injury. As this athlete explained:

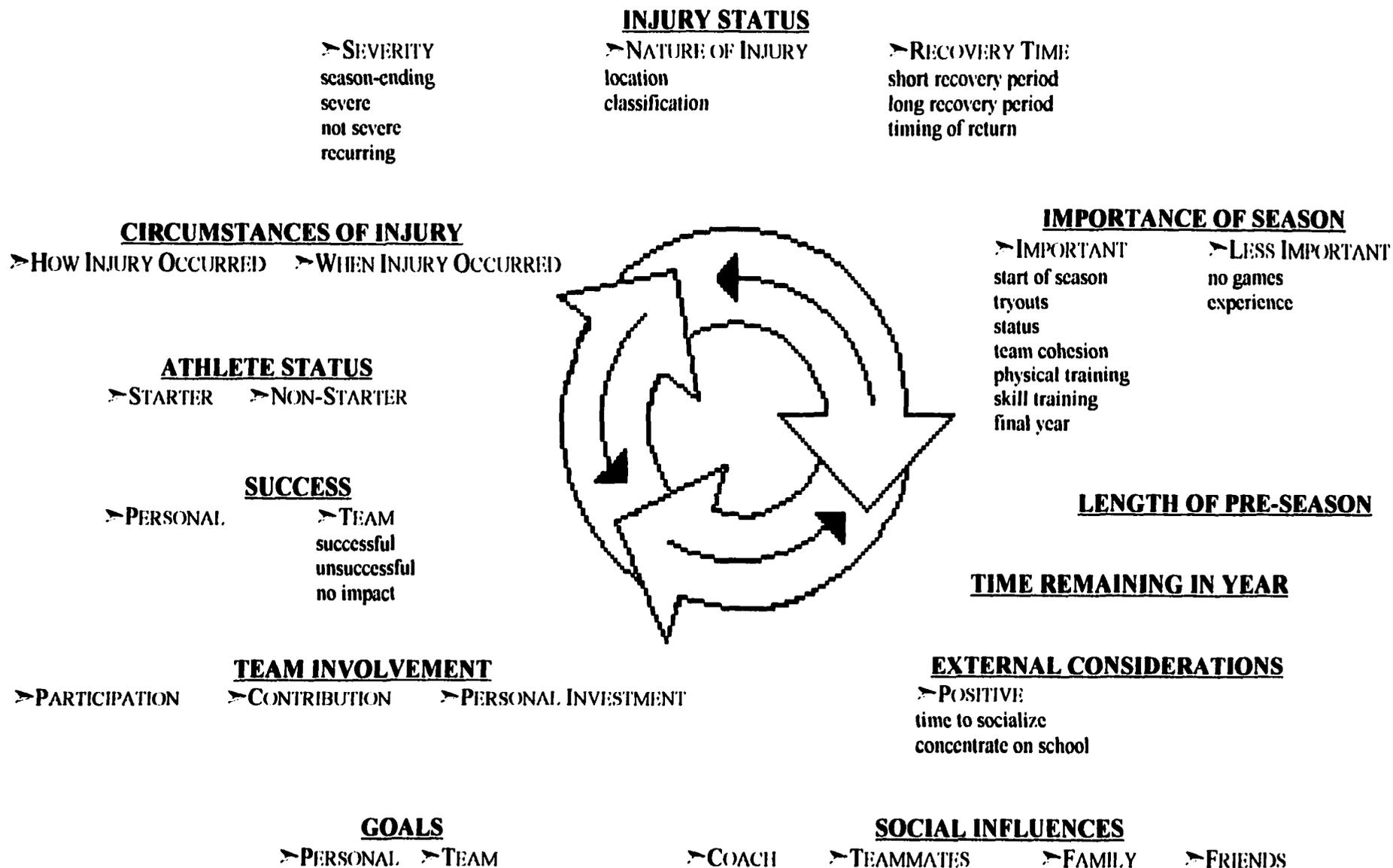
...your school work could be affected because if you're injured, a lot of ball players they believe that the only reason they're in school is because of basketball and that's what pushes them and if you take that push away, what's going to motivate you to go to class, to get good grades, to lift?...the post-season it would [affect you] and mid-season because in regards to school, that's when exams are... (Andrew, 22, varsity)

## Summary

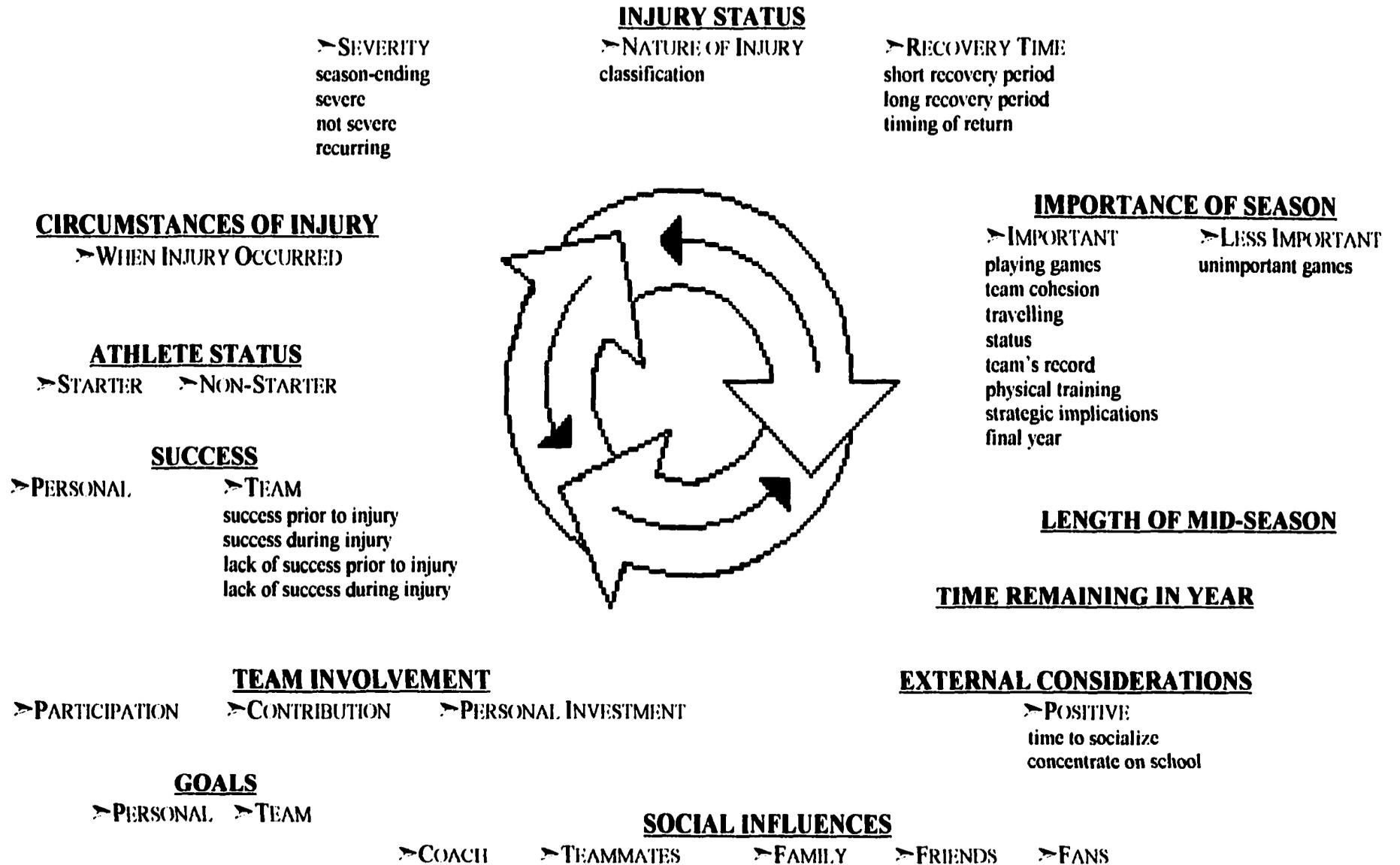
The purpose of the present study was to identify variables that may influence athletes' cognitive appraisal of the timing of injury onset and in turn, affect their emotional and behavioural response to the injury experience. Previous authors have stated that an injury early in the season will result in less emotional disturbance than an injury at the end of the season (Weiss & Troxel, 1986). The results of the present research do not entirely support this claim. Athletes do not want to be injured at any time in the year and for the most part, respond negatively to an injury in any season. However, the present study has also discovered that there are variables that can help athletes feel more positive towards the onset of injury.

The interview data revealed that athletes appraise the impact of athletic injury at the four times of the season according to 11 general categories including: importance of the season, length of season, time remaining in year, injury status, circumstances of injury, athlete status, success, team involvement, goals, social influences, and external considerations.

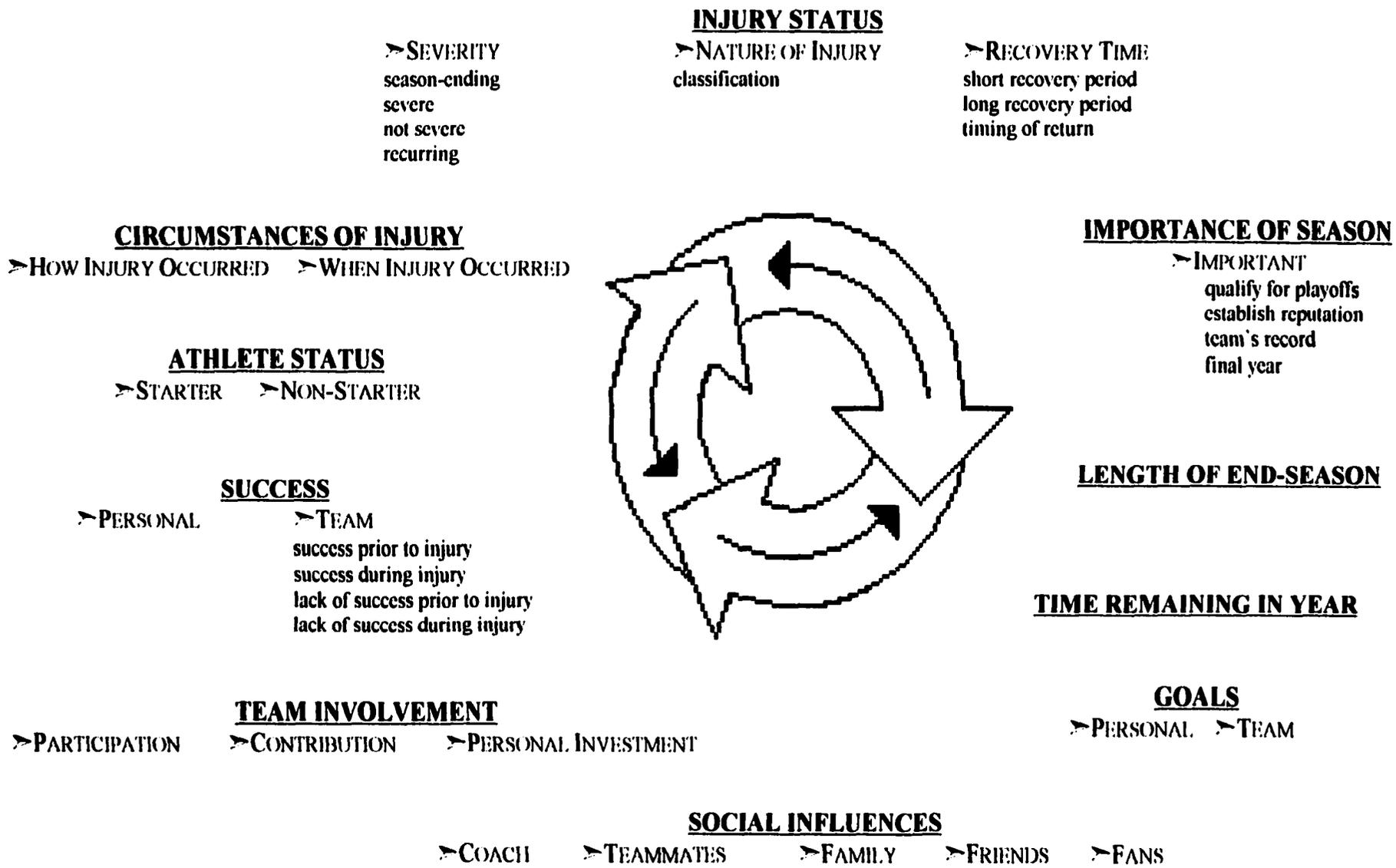
These variables are summarized in a series of four diagrams (see Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4). It is important to note that the different variables influencing this appraisal are inter-related and simultaneously affect emotional and behavioural outcomes. At any time of the season an injury is incurred, athletes will consider one or more of these variables and how they interact to impact the injury situation. The complex and dynamic nature of this appraisal is represented by the bi-directional arrows at the centre of each diagram. The two directions that can be taken in the cognitive process illustrate that at any point in the season, the variables that appraised by the injured athlete may be considered in any order.



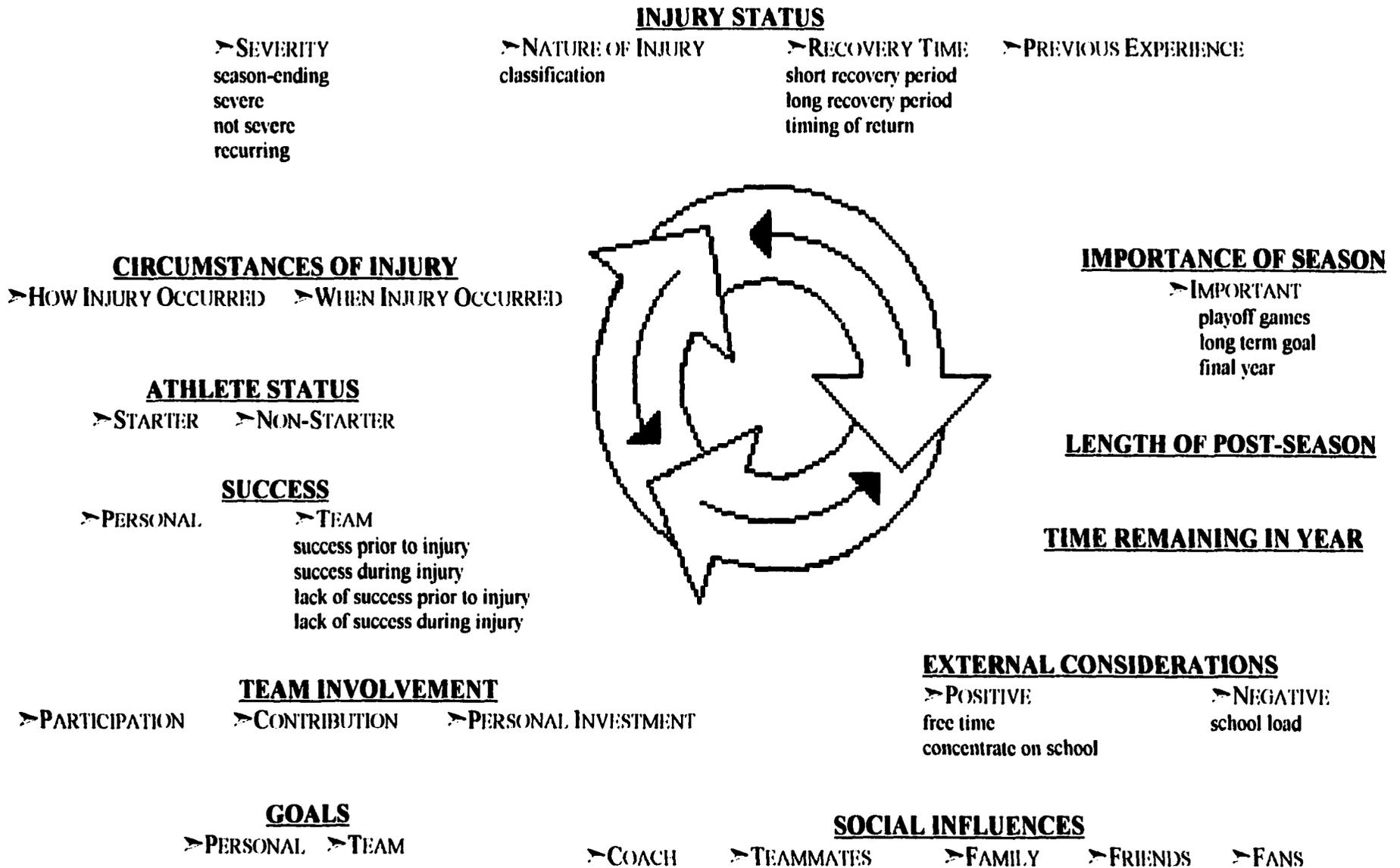
**Figure 2:** Variables considered in the cognitive appraisal of an injury that occurs in PRE-SEASON.



**Figure 3:** Variables considered in the cognitive appraisal of an injury that occurs in MID-SEASON.



**Figure 4:** Variables considered in the cognitive appraisal of an injury that occurs in END-SEASON.



**Figure 5:** Variables considered in the cognitive appraisal of an injury that occurs in POST-SEASON.

These results, however, are preliminary. Generalizations to other populations can not be made due to the small sample size and the distinct characteristics of the participants that were interviewed. The participants all came from the same university and had experienced only minor to moderate degrees of injury. It is possible that students as a population have different concerns that may not influence the cognitive appraisal of other athletes and that athletes who have sustained major injuries may react to the situation differently at each time of the season. Furthermore, other than the travel opportunities noted by the varsity group, no differences between the varsity and recreational athletes who participated in the present study were found.

Future research on the timing of injury in the sport season should replicate the study with participants from sports other than basketball, athletes involved in individual versus team sports, and higher levels of sport including NCAA and professional athletes. In addition, future studies on the topic should ensure that specific operational definitions are presented to participants and should consider using recreational athletes who have a longer sport season overall that can be divided into definitive time periods. Some participants in the present study included the informal training period that may be termed as “off-season” in their assessment of pre-season and many recreational athletes could not speak about their feelings about injury in the present because they did not have specific times of the season. Instead, these athletes reflected on how they would react to an injury at each time of the season in terms of their participation in high school basketball.

Researchers are also encouraged to replicate the study with participants who become injured at each point in the season. The present study is based on hypothetical scenarios and therefore, may not be a true representation of athletes’ reactions to injury at each time of the

season. Similar to retrospective contamination, athletes' reports may not be as accurate as they would be if the researcher interviewed them immediately following an injury. A longitudinal study may be able to uncover more authentic information if athletes injured in each time period are interviewed.

Although additional research is needed on this topic, the present study does provide new information on the complexity of the cognitive appraisal made by athletes following a sport injury and its subsequent affect on emotional and behavioural responses. Sport psychologists, health care professionals, coaches, teammates, family members, and friends need to emphasize the positive aspects of sport injury during the different times of the season and be cognizant of the variables that may make the injury experience more negative for the athlete. Only by understanding the cognitive appraisal of injured athletes can we help facilitate a full physical and psychological recovery.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix A**  
**Demographic Questionnaire**

The following questionnaire is designed to measure demographic variables of athletes. Information provided will be kept strictly confidential. Please answer as accurately as possible.

Gender:      Male                       Female                       Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Level of Sport:      Recreational       or      Varsity

Position On Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Years Involved in Basketball: \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale from 1-5 rate how athletic you perceive you are.

1	2	3	4	5
Not Athletic	Moderately Athletic		Very Athletic	

On a scale from 1-5 rate the importance of sport in your lifestyle.

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important	Moderately Important		Very Important	

Have you ever been injured before?                      Yes                      No

How vividly do you remember being injured?

1	2	3	4	5
Not At All	Somewhat Vividly		Very Vividly	

Indicate how long your pre-season is: \_\_\_\_\_ weeks  
 Indicate how long your mid-season is: \_\_\_\_\_ weeks  
 Indicate how long your end-season is: \_\_\_\_\_ weeks  
 Indicate how long your post-season (playoffs) is: \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Appendix B  
Interview Schedule

Hello, I'm Amy Gayman. The purpose of this study is to better understand how athletes think about the timing of a sport injury in the sport season and, in turn, how they feel about injuries at different times of the season.

As a participant in this study, you have a number of rights. First, your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions or stop the interview at any time. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that I will be asking. I am interested to learn about your perspective on injuries so please answer the questions freely.

I want to emphasize that your interview information will remain completely confidential. Although quotations from the interviews may be used to illustrate important ideas, your identity will remain anonymous. The data will be stored securely at Lakehead University for a period of seven years. If you have any questions during the interview, please do not hesitate to ask. Also, ask for clarification if at any time you do not understand what I'm asking. Before we get started, please read over the following sheets and sign the informed consent form if you are willing to participate in the study. Now I would like to collect your background information. Please complete the following sheet and then we will begin the interview.

**First, I'd like to know how you feel the timing of an injury affects your emotional reaction to it. Here are some times in the season that you might become injured. *Show cue cards.***

1. Do you think that you would react differently at any of these times? Probe: For example, would you feel differently about your injury if you were hurt in the pre-season versus the post-season (mid-season versus end-season)? If so, in what way(s)?

**Now I want you to imagine an injury that would prevent you from participating in basketball for a period of one month.**

2. Describe the type of injury that you have imagined.
3. Why did you choose this injury?
4. Have you or a teammate ever experienced this injury? If yes, did you or did your teammates experience the injury? Please describe what happened.

**The first set of questions pertain to how you would feel if the injury that you have imagined happened to you in the pre-season; that is, in the training period before your season begins. *Cue card.***

5. How do you think you would emotionally react if you got injured in the pre-season?
- 5b. What are some words that would accurately describe how you would feel?

6. If you were injured in the pre-season, would the severity of your injury affect your emotional reaction? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** How would you react if you incurred an injury in the pre-season that was severe (not severe)?
7. Do you think that your previous experience (inexperience) with injury might affect how you'd emotionally react to the injury in the pre-season? If yes, in what way(s)?
8. Would your position on the team affect how you might emotionally react to being injured in the pre-season? **Probe:** That is, would a starter react differently than a non-starter? If so, in what way(s)?
9. Would the success of the team the year before affect your feelings about your injury in the pre-season? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** If the team was performing well (poorly) how would you feel if you were injured in the pre-season?
10. How do you think that your coach/captain, (teammates, friends, family) would react if you were injured in the pre-season? Would this influence your own feelings about the injury?
11. If you were injured in the pre-season, would the importance of the sport season affect your feelings about the injury?
12. If you were out of action for one month in the pre-season, do you think that the injury might affect your goals? If so, in what way(s)? How would that make you feel? **Probe:** Do you think that your personal (team) goals might be affected?

**The next questions relate to the mid-season. That is, how you would feel if you experienced the injury that you imagined in the middle of your season, during exhibition games. Cue card.**

13. How do you think you would emotionally react if you go injured in the mid-season?
- 13b. What are some words that would accurately describe how you would feel?
14. If you were injured in the mid-season would the severity of your injury affect your emotional reaction? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** How would you react if you incurred an injury in the mid-season that was severe (not severe)?
15. Do you think that your previous experience (inexperience) with injury might affect how you'd emotionally react to the injury in the mid-season? If so, in what way(s)?
16. Would your position on the team affect how you might emotionally react to being injured in the mid-season? **Probe:** That is, would a starter react differently than a non-starter? If so, in what way(s)?

17. Would the success of the team affect your feelings about your injury in the mid-season? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** If the team was performing well (poorly) how would you feel if you were injured in the mid-season?
18. How do you think that your coach/captain (teammates, friends, family) would react if you were injured in the mid-season? Would this influence your own feelings about the injury?
19. If you were injured in the mid-season, would the importance of the sport season affect your feelings about the injury?
20. If you were out of action for one month in the mid-season, do you think that the injury might affect your goals? If so, in what way(s)? How would that make you feel? **Probe:** Do you think that your personal (team) goals might be affected?

**Now I'd like you to remember the injury that you have imagined in relation to the end-season. That is, how would you feel about getting this injury in the last few weeks of your season when you are trying to make the playoffs. *Show cue card.***

21. How do you think you would emotionally react if you got injured in the end-season?
- 21b. What are some words that would accurately describe how you might feel?
22. Would the severity of your injury affect your emotional reaction to it in the end-season? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** How would you react if you incurred an injury in the end-season that was severe (not severe)?
23. Do you think that your previous experience (inexperience) with injury might affect how you'd emotionally react to the injury in the end-season? If so, in what way(s)?
24. Would your position on the team affect how you might emotionally react to being injured in the end-season? **Probe:** That is, would a starter react differently than a non-starter? If so, in what way(s)?
25. Would the success of the team affect your feelings about your injury in the end-season? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** If the team was performing well (poorly) how would you feel if you were injured in the end-season?
26. How do you think that your coach/captain (teammates, friends, family) would react if you were injured in the end-season? Would this impact on your own feelings about the injury?
27. If you were injured in the end-season, would the importance of the sport season affect your feelings about the injury?

28. If you were out of action for one month in the end-season, do you think that the injury might affect your goals? If so, in what way(s)? How would that make you feel? **Probe:** Do you think that your personal (team) goals might be affected?

**The remaining questions pertain to how you would feel about getting this injury in the post-season. That is, during the playoffs. Cue card.**

29. How do you think you would emotionally react if you got injured in the post-season?
- 29b. What are some words that would accurately describe how you might feel?
30. Would the severity of your injury affect your emotional reaction to it in the post-season? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** How would you react if you incurred an injury in the post-season that was severe (not severe)?
31. Do you think that your previous experience (inexperience) with injury might affect how you'd emotionally react to the injury in the post-season? If so, in what way(s)?
32. Would your position on the team affect how you might emotionally react to being injured in the post-season? **Probe:** That is, would a starter react differently than a non-starter? If so, in what way(s)?
33. Would the success of the team affect your feelings about your injury in the post-season? If so, in what way(s)? **Probe:** If the team was performing well (poorly) how would you feel if you were injured in the post-season?
34. How do you think that your coach/captain (teammates, friends, family) would react if you were injured in the post-season? Would this impact on your own feelings about the injury?
35. If you were injured in the post-season, would the importance of the sport season affect your feelings about the injury?
36. If you were out of action for one month in the post-season, do you think that the injury might affect your goals? If so, in what way(s)? How would that make you feel? **Probe:** Do you think that your personal (team) goals might be affected?
37. Is there anything else pertaining to the timing of your injury in the sport season that may affect your emotional reaction to it?
38. During the four different times are there any other factors that may cause you to react positively to your injury?
39. During the four different times are there any other factors that may cause you to react negatively to your injury?

**Appendix C**  
**Cover Letter**

**Dear Participant:**

**Thank you for volunteering to participate in a study concerning the relationship between emotional responses to sport injury and timing of the injury occurrence. Although researchers have recognized the importance of studying the relationship between timing of injury onset and athletes' emotional reaction to sport injury, research on the timing of sport injury in relation to the competitive season has yet to be conducted.**

**Amy Gayman, under the supervision of Dr. Jane Crossman of the Kinesiology department of Lakehead University, is conducting the study entitled "Cognitive Appraisal: A Mediator of Timing of Injury Onset and Emotional Response to Injury".**

**The intent of this research project is (a) to investigate the relationship between the timing of injury onset and athletes' emotional response to injury by speaking with athletes' about their views on sport injury and (b) to develop a model that can explain the different variables that may influence athletes' reactions to the injury situation. To accomplish these goals, you will be asked to answer questions that will involve your feelings about sport injury, your thoughts on sport injury, and your past experience with injury.**

**The interview will take approximately 20 minutes and you may refuse to participate in the research or omit to answer any questions at any time. All responses are welcome and any information provided will remain confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. The findings of this project will be made available to you upon the completion of the project.**

**Thank-you for your cooperation. If you have any questions about the research, the procedures employed, your rights, or any other research-related concerns, please contact Dr. Jane Crossman at the number listed below.**

**Sincerely,**

**Amy Gayman, Researcher**

**Dr. Jane Crossman, Faculty Advisor**

**(807) 343-8642**

**Appendix D**  
**Informed Consent**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in a study by Amy Gayman concerning the relationship between emotional responses to sport injury and timing of the injury occurrence.

**I have read and understood the cover letter of the study entitled “Cognitive Appraisal: A Mediator of Timing of Injury Onset and Emotional Response to Injury” and am aware of the following:**

**I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time.**

**All responses are welcome and that I may refuse to answer any questions.**

**I have the right to have any questions answered by the researcher or the faculty advisor in sufficient detail to clearly understand the answer.**

**There is no apparent risk of physical or psychological harm.**

**The data I provide will be confidential.**

**Information about the findings of the study will be made available to me upon the completion of the project.**

**I have received explanations about the nature of the study, its purposes, and procedures.**

**I acknowledge receiving a copy of this informed consent.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Amy Gayman, Researcher**

**Dr. Jane Crossman, Faculty Advisor**

**(807) 343-8642**

**Appendix E**  
**Information About The Study: Sport Injury and Emotional Response**

Thank you for your participation in the present study. Participants consisted of athletes involved in the sport of basketball at the recreational and varsity level. All athletes were interviewed by the researcher to determine the relationship between the emotional responses of athletes and sport injury. Specifically, the researcher was interested in how athletes cognitively appraise the injury situation depending on what time in the season that the injury occurs. It is expected that a number of situational and personal factors may influence how athletes interpret the effect that the time of the season may have and in turn, respond emotionally to the experience.

The overall research on the present study will be made available to you upon the completion of the project. If you have any further questions about the research, the procedures employed, or any other research-related concerns, please contact Dr. Jane Crossman at the number listed below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Amy Gayman, Researcher**

**Dr. Jane Crossman, Faculty Advisor**

**(807) 343-8642**