

Two new studies show connection between sleepiness and pro-athlete careers

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Coaches, owners and fantasy-league traders take note: Sleep researcher W. Christopher Winter, MD, has uncovered a link between a pro athlete's longevity and the degree of sleepiness experienced in the daytime.

Winter is presenting two studies today at SLEEP 2012 that associate the career spans of baseball and [football players](#) with their voluntary answers on a [sleepiness](#) questionnaire. The results show that less sleepy football players tended to remain with their drafting NFL teams after college. In addition, attrition rates for sleepier [baseball players](#) trended higher than MLB averages.

"A team's ability to accurately judge a prospect or a potential trade in terms of the value they will get for that player is what makes or breaks many professional sport teams," said Winter, principal investigator of the studies and the sleep advisor for Men's Health magazine. "These studies demonstrate that a simple evaluation of sleepiness may be a powerful tool to add to the list of tests athletes already undergo, such as the Wonderlic Cognitive Abilities Test and the 40-yard dash."

The football study looked at 55 randomly selected college players who landed in the NFL, finding that sleepier athletes only had a 38 percent chance of staying with the team that originally drafted them. In comparison, 56 percent of the less sleepy players were considered a "value pick" because they did stay with the original team. The baseball study analyzed the sleepiness scale of 40 randomly selected baseball

players and found that players who reported higher levels of [daytime sleepiness](#) also had attrition rates of 57 percent to 86 percent, well above the 30 - 35 percent MLB average.

Winter said measuring sleepiness could do more for a team than help it decide who to draft. "Addressing sleepiness in players and correcting the underlying issues causing sleepiness may help to prolong a player's career," he said.

Winter and his colleagues at Martha Jefferson Hospital [Sleep Medicine Center](#) and CNSM Consulting in Charlottesville, Va., used the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS), a short questionnaire that can be helpful in detecting excessive daytime sleepiness. EDS is a common symptom of many sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea.

The abstracts "Sleepiness as a predictor of draft value in the National Football League" and "Sleepiness as a predictor of player longevity within Major League Baseball" are being presented today at SLEEP 2012, the 26th annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS) in Boston.

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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