THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF
PROFESSIONAL SPORT ON THE WIVES AND
FAMILIES OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
of the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
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By

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In memory of

John H. Kochensparger

Father, Friend, Sports Fan Extraordinaire
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was conducted to examine and describe the psychological and sociological effects of professional sport on the wives and families of either present or former professional athletes. The study was prompted by the investigator’s interests in both family development and in sport, and by the scarcity of research that focuses attention on the wives of professional athletes.

Sport is said to be both a microcosm of society (Eitzen, 1984) and to be "such a pervasive activity in contemporary America that to ignore it is to overlook one of the most significant aspects of this society" (Sage, 1984, p. 9). At no time in the history of our country have sports been more important than they are now. According to Lipsyte (1971) by the end of the 1960’s religion had become a spectator sport while professional and college athletic contests were the only events that Americans held sacred.

Presently, professional sport is responsible for consuming much time, money and emotional energy of American society. Many hours each week are devoted to coverage of professional sporting events by T.V. networks, enough that
television is now controlling sport. Underwood (1984) declared, that sport "has been transformed into economic snakeoil. From something wonderful, it has been made grotesque by commerce" (pp. 4-5).

At the center of the big business of professional sport is the athlete, and much research has been done concerning the male professional athlete. His personality characteristics, motivation level, leadership qualities, educational status and his retirement from athletics have all come under the scrutiny of research. The professional male athlete often basks in the limelight of attention. He is interviewed by sportscasters, writers, talk-show personalities, and is the main speaker at banquets. He’s sought after for his autograph, featured on the cover of sport magazines and may even see his six or seven figure salary mentioned in print.

In the background of all the fame experienced by the professional male athlete are often a wife and family. Crute (1981) states that "next to the athlete, the person most centrally linked to this life in professional sport is the wife" (p. 4). In working with professional athletes and their families Cronson and Mitchell (1987) have noted that these individuals confront unique stresses such as dramatic increases in income, geographic relocation, balancing sport with family life, and adjustment to celebrity status. These unique stresses occur in an
atmosphere of a "greedy occupation" (Handy, 1978) in a "greedy institution." Coser (1974) defines a "greedy institution" as those which:

make total claims on their members and which attempt to encompass within their circle the whole personality . . . they seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and they attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries. Their demands on the person are omnivorous (p. 4).

By its very nature professional athletics is a "greedy occupation" and it appears, from the lack of research in this area, that the problems or concerns experienced by the wives and families of professional athletes have been neglected.

**Purpose of the Study**

Because research indicates the interactive nature of occupation and family life, this study was conducted to examine and describe the psychological and sociological effects of professional sport on the wives and families of professional athletes. More specifically, exploration of the effects of sport on these wives and families may help answer the three primary research questions of this study:

1. What are the greatest sources of both anxiety and satisfaction experienced by these wives within their marriage?
2. How has their role concept and personal identity been affected by their marriage?
3. What social, financial, and psychological issues of athletic retirement do these wives face?

Overview of Design and Methodology

During the period extending from August, 1988, to October, 1989, 31 women, whose husbands are either active or retired professional golfers, basketball or football players, were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in 10 major metropolitan areas throughout the United States. Most took place in the homes of the participants. The interview guide approach was the primary technique utilized for this research. This method was selected because of the scarcity of research in this area and because an intensive personal interview can elicit rich data for qualitative analysis.

In order to assure accurate reporting of responses and to eliminate extensive writing each interview was tape recorded. Each recorded interview was transcribed and coded by topic areas. Data were then sorted and retrieved through the use of THE ETHNOGRAPH computer program.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The sample selected for the study consisted of 11 golf and 11 football wives and 9 basketball wives. The athletes involved in these three sports share certain
commonalities. Two of the three sports are seasonal and the majority of these players have attended college. Many enjoy high salaries and have realized celebrity status. However, the professional athletes have experienced different socioeconomic backgrounds, racial or subcultural dissimilarities and differentiation in contract security. The discrepancies, which are realized by the wives and families, made the examination of all three sports requisite.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Certain limitations must be recognized in any research endeavor. Because this was a qualitative study utilizing in-depth, private interviews it was not possible to obtain a random sample. Even though this researcher made every effort to procure a cross-section of wives, accessibility, desire to participate, and location of residence influenced the selection of subjects. Financial restrictions on travel had to be considered. Funds for out-of-town travel to conduct interviews were limited so coordination of subject’s schedules and availability were necessary.

This study of 31 wives of professional athletes is limited to this particular group of women. No attempt has been made to generalize the findings to a broader population of wives. While many aspects of the participants lives may be similar to other wives married to
professional athletes, both in these three sports as well as other sports, the design of this research does not allow generalization of conclusions.

OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION

Chapter I has presented an introduction and statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, an overview of the design and methodology, and the scope and limitations of the research project.

Chapter II is a review of the literature. This chapter contains an examination of literature which has a relation to the impact of professional sport on the wives and families of professional athletes. The areas of investigation include: (1) interaction of occupational stress and family life; (2) role concept; and (3) athletic retirement.

Chapter III is a discussion of the design and methodology of this research project and focuses on the interview technique, subject selection, the interview process, and data analysis.

Chapter IV is a presentation of demographics of the sample as well as the findings in the areas of occupational impact, role concept, retirement, additional topics, and recommendations of the participants.

Chapter V is a summary of the findings and an interpretation of the results as they pertain to the
research questions. The implications of the findings for current practice and for future research are also discussed.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter contains an examination of literature which has a relation to the psychological and sociological impact of professional sport on wives and families of professional athletes. The areas of investigation include: (a) interaction of occupational stress and family life; (b) role concept; and (c) athletic retirement.

**Interaction of Occupational Stress and Family Life**

Occupational life and family life have been found to be interdependent. Burke (1982) found that "work demands had an influence beyond the workplace and into the lives of spouses" (p. 823). Cooper (1981) agreed that it has become more difficult to differentiate between the sources of stress that arise from work and those that originate from the family. Renshaw (1976) stated:

Stress is created by organizations and families by the fact that people live simultaneously in both systems, and the pressure of events in the two systems is cumulative. Stresses in one system are not caused by events in the other system but are a function of the interactive nature of the relationship (pp. 163-164).
In discussing a summary of studies relating work and family, Burke and Bradshaw (1981) concluded that "these research findings help to destroy the myth that work experiences and family experiences do not influence each other" (p. 343).

Other than a study by Crute (1981) there is little research that specifically addresses the effects of professional sport on wives and families. However, there are several studies that investigate occupation and marital and family relationships that might be generalized to the wives and families of professional athletes.

Hageman (1977) investigated occupational stress of law enforcement officers and their marital and familial relationships. This research, using 70 law officers and their spouses, explored job and family compatibility, job satisfaction, role commitment, role conflict, authoritarianism, social isolation, marital happiness, and marital satisfaction. In analyzing the findings the author indicated: (1) The law officer learns to cope with occupational stress by detachment (being emotionally uninvolved) and, as the length of service increases, this coping method becomes part of the officer's personality; (2) According to the wives, as the length of service increases, so does their spouses' emotional detachment and repression, thereby decreasing marital satisfaction and happiness; (3) The connection between wives' feelings of
marital happiness and their impressions of their spouses’ repression was additional support for the inter-role conflict between job roles and marriage roles.

The results of this research stimulate the question of application of the findings to professional athletes and their families. Do male athletes deal with occupational stress by repression of emotions and increased detachment, thereby affecting the marital satisfaction of their wives? Unlike law enforcement officers, professional athletes generally are not faced with social isolation but both groups do share the prospect of personal injury and replacement by younger, more physically-abled players/officers. Job stress similarities do exist.

Chavis (1979) studied the effect of medical training on marital adjustment and role performance among medical students, interns, residents, and their wives. In addition to five instruments, a structured interview employing open-ended questions for each spouse of the 43 sample couples was used. Results of the study indicated: Significant differences in marital role strain were found to exist between wives and their resident husbands; indications of role strain were higher for husbands than their wives; the degree to which the adjustment to marriage is made by an intern and his spouse is determined by the husband’s role performance and how he does or does not meet his wife’s role expectation of him.
The medical interns/residents can be likened to rookie professional athletes in that both groups invest vast amounts of time in their professions, each requires a high skill level, and both are subjected to constant critiques of their performance by higher authority figures. The question can be posed as to whether or not rookie years are more stressful for professional athletes and their wives than subsequent years in sport.

Athletes must face the prospect of unexpected loss of jobs, either because of injury or competition from other players. Other professions may provide similar experiences.

Thirteen families participated in a study by Bledsoe (1980) who investigated the impact of the loss of a pastorate upon Southern Baptist ministers and their families. In each case there was no immediate prospect for another pastorate. Paper and pencil instruments and personal interviews were used to develop the case studies. Bledsoe (1980) summarized his findings:

1) Marital and/or familial tensions are present in varying degrees within most families of Southern Baptist ministers who undergo the career crisis of a loss of the pastorate, irrespective of the support which arises within the family.

2) The children as well as the parents seem to be initially negatively affected by the career crisis,
possibly due to the uncertainties concerning the need for relocation.

3) Some individuals appear to be affected physically and/or emotionally as a result of the stresses they undergo.

4) Most of the pastors and many of the family members had indications of what appears to be stages of the grief process as described by Kubler-Ross which, in turn, seems to be directly related to career crisis.

A team is an athlete’s family in many of the same ways that a congregation is a minister’s family. In each case the family (team or congregation) has shared goals and incentives and work together for the good of all. In each profession the family usually becomes involved. Just as a minister’s wife attends services to listen to her husband preach, an athlete’s wife attends games to watch her husband perform. As in the loss of a pastorate, the loss of a team may greatly affect an athlete. The professional athlete must either find another team which will offer him a contract or consider a career change. Emotional responses to loss may be similar in both groups.

In an exploratory study of stress in marital relationships and life-styles of missile launch officers, Corwin (1980) hypothesized that the combination of psychological stress and unusual work circumstances creates
problems within marriage and family relationships.
Multiple choice questionnaires were sent to 250 wives of
junior officers in order to determine satisfaction and
dissatisfaction in daily family relationships. Corwin
believed the hypothesis to be substantiated because the
results indicated: (1) Wives of missile launch officers
viewed more stress in their life style and marriages than
the wives of officers whose jobs had more regular hours and
more usual working conditions; (2) among the most
dissatisfied wives of missile launch officers were those
who were not working, had been married less than three
years, were college graduates, and whose husbands were not
making the military a career.

Certain commonalities do exist between the wives of
professional athletes and wives of missile launch
officers. Separations and irregular working hours are
characteristics of their husband's jobs, and they affect
their lives. Many wives of professional athletes have met
their husbands in college, have relatively new marriages,
and their husbands participate in professional sport for a
limited number of years. Both groups of wives are
constantly adjusting to their husbands' working conditions;
so both groups may have similar responses.

In order to determine the relationship between the
marital satisfaction of football coaches' wives and the
degree of job involvement strain, and psychosomatic stress
associated with coaching high school football, Matejkovic (1983) surveyed 120 high school coaches and wives. The results indicated:

significant correlations between wives' marital satisfaction and the level of job involvement and job related strain experienced by the football coach, and that there are significant correlations between wives' marital satisfaction and some demographic variables identified in this study (p. 72).

In essence, there is occupational stress associated with professional sports. While high pay and prestige may be factors associated with this job, other elements of the occupation can influence the participants. The athlete may be concerned with physical strain, contract negotiations, exhausting travel and practice schedules, family separations, maintaining a "must win" mentality, and future occupations. Crute (1981), in a study of 25 wives of professional athletes who played either baseball or football, stated that "rather than separate spheres, we have noted the numerous dimensions of the work/family linkages in professional sport" (p. 291). When discussing the interrelationship of family and occupation, Crute also notes the difficulty of making friends outside of sport, the fear and the impact of injury, and job insecurity. Mitchell and Cronson (1987) found the social isolation may be a problem for some athletes and their families.
In addition to the occupation stress associated with the job of professional athletics, the wives of athletes often incur an additional stress associated with their husband's job. Availability of women, known as groupies, to their husbands is a source of problems for some wives. This predicament is noted by Whiteside (1977), Bouton and Marshall (1983) and Crute (1981). When describing the antagonism that can develop when an athlete travels so much and his wife begins to feel the need to be nurtured herself, and therefore fails to give the athlete all the attention and praise he is accustomed to, Ritter (1983) stated:

The role of women in the macho world of big-time male sports exacerbates this estrangement. For rock stars and athletes, women are as available as hamburgers and they are less expensive. Both at home and especially on the road, teams attract camp followers who want to share in the action. It is the standard assumption of most ballplayers that any woman who says "hello" wants to jump into bed as soon as possible. Although ballplayers may not think that way in the beginning, they come to that conclusion before too long because that's the way it often turns out. Women become as disposable as Kleenex, sex as casual as hailing a cab (p. xv).

In a list compiled in The Jobs Rated Almanac and published by USA TODAY (May 19, 1988, p. 7B), 250 jobs were ranked based on salary, stress, work environment, outlook, security and physical demands. With number one being the best job and number 250 being the worst job, NFL football
player was ranked number 241. Assuming similarities in the jobs of professional athletes, coupled with the evidence from research indicating interaction between occupational and family life, it appears that wives of professional athletes experience occupational fallout associated with marriage to someone in this occupation.

**Role Concept**

Role, as defined by Eshleman (1985) deals with a relationship between what we do and what others do, with the emphasis on the process. Linton (1936) states that "role represents the dynamic aspect of a status" (p. 114). The process and dynamics of role concept in marriage and the family can be examined within the sociological framework of the social exchange theory. The origin of this theory is found in behavioral psychology and economic theory and the basic assumption of this framework can be described as follows: "Individuals in social interactions attempt to maximize rewards and minimize cost in order to obtain the most profitable outcomes (outcomes = rewards - costs)" (Nass & McDonald, 1982, p. 54). An individual who invests time and money in a relationship often hopes or expects to be repaid in terms of friendship or a deepening of the relationship. However, if the costs of the endeavor outweigh the rewards, the relationship will likely cease. The rewards and costs may be either tangible (property,
money, gifts) or intangible (love, increased social status, attention) resources. Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1976) stress that exchange transactions can be both conscious and unconscious acts. Moreover, the value of the resources (such as occupation or beauty) can change with time (Mürstein, 1976).

A variation of the social exchange theory is Blood and Wolfe's (1960) resource theory which maintains that, in decision making, the marriage partner who contributes the greatest resource will have the greatest power. According to Cromwell and Olson (1975) the resource theory is based on three assumptions: 1) Everyone is constantly trying to satisfy his own needs and desires to attain goals; 2) Most needs are satisfied through social interaction with other groups or persons; and 3) During social interaction there is a recurring exchange of resources which contribute to the satisfaction of individual need and accomplishment of individual or group goals. Furthermore, an individual desiring resources from another may elect to exchange or give up power over his or her own behavior in order to access those resources.

According to Bahr (1982) one of the most important rewards in marriage appears to be the competent performance of roles within the family. And it stands to reason that, as role performance increases, rewards will also increase.
These ideas are summarized by Bahr (p. 84) in the following propositions:

1) The more competent one's role performance, the greater the rewards to one's spouse.

2) The greater the rewards provided to one's spouse, the more likely the spouse will comply in the face of conflict.

3) The more competent one's role performance, the more likely the spouse will comply in the face of conflict.

When using resource theory to examine how a woman conceptualizes or performs her role within her marriage, literature indicates that women have less power or control in marriage than men. Results from Scanzoni's (1970, 1972) survey of 900 marriages of different socioeconomic levels determined that the better the husband's achievement in the economic system the more probable it was that the wife believed her husband deserved greater power in the relationship.

Growler and Legge (1978) believe there is a hidden "work contract" in the traditional marriage that is often balanced by a hidden "marriage contract":

The wife may go along with the demands of her husband's career in return for a greater say in other areas. She may expect and be given a more equal share of disposing of the material rewards that result from his career progression, more attention in his free time or a greater range of free time and holidays for herself (p. 52).
Power, as noted by Gillespie (1979), is not the outcome of resources or single contributions within the marriage, but is related to issues of social worth; and, as viewed by society, the value of women and their work is very low. Therefore, for a woman to obtain any power in a marriage, she must obtain it from outside sources. For example, she must surpass the educational level of her husband or join the work force in order to negotiate for authority.

Safilios-Rothschild (1972) noted that "when researchers began studying marriage, they found that women made far more of the adjustments than men (p. 368). In addition, women tended to evaluate their marriages lower than men did. This low evaluation may be the result of the apparent economic dependency which limits behavior range within the marriage. Also, "involved in this situation is the confronting of emotional ties with economic dependency for women" (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Sellaman, 1978; p. 318).

According to Gilligan (1979) the woman's place in man's life cycle has been helpmate, nurturer, and caretaker and, while women have taken care of men, men have tended to either assume or devalue that care. This devaluation has had effects on the social status of women. Sheehy (1979) states that the message has been "you are who you marry and mother" (p. 98). Research by Felson and Knoke (1974) examine the dependence of married women upon men for their
achievement of social status. Results from the survey of 1,160 men and women indicated that both wives and husbands appear to pay little attention to the achievements of wives when evaluating their own social status. The dependence of married women upon men for social status was also mentioned by Rock (1986):

But for men, being married is not a time-honored method of gaining social status, as it still is for women. Females have been conditioned by centuries of need to select the mate who is seemingly best equipped to anchor them safely in society. Men have always had to provide their own anchor; the notion that women also can stand alone is fairy new (p. 16).

Self-esteem may also be affected by low social status. Mareck and Ballou (1981) refer to studies by Birnbaum (1975) which indicate that women in the role of housewife have lower self-esteem than their employed counterparts. And middle-class housewives may be particularly affected because their endeavors may appear less fascinating and less stimulating than those of their employed peers or spouses. It is the opinion of Dowling (1981) that middle-class housewives are particularly susceptible to the belief that someone else will take care of them and that they don’t have to be responsible for their own welfare:

These are the protected ones: Young, attractive, sassy - and safe. They presume financial dependence to be their right, as women. In exchange they devote themselves to homemaking, happily priding themselves on their ability to clean, to organize, to rear children, to
entertain, but inwardly, without being conscious of it, they have setup an agenda: they avoid, almost ritualistically, any recognition of how precarious their lives are. They do not think about what would happen if their marriages were to break up (p. 52).

This assumption by many women of "being taken care of" is consistent with Bernard’s (1984) belief about the "good provider" role. Historically, as women left the work place and spent time engaged in family care, they were put in a vulnerable position. Discouraged from being part of the labor force, and because they were not reimbursed for their services to the family, they lost access to income. Therefore, women began to dedicate themselves to finding and winning a "good provider" who would take care of them. Because he supplied all of the income the "good provider" not only had a great deal of power in family decision-making but he also organized the lives of his family around his occupation. In addition, this "good provider role allowed men to compete with other men. As stated by Bernard:

The good provider became a player in the male competitive macho game. What one man provided for his family in the way of luxury and display had to be equaled or topped by what another could provide. Families became display cases for the success of the good provider (p. 48).

When dependent on a provider, women may develop apprehension about their identity and self concept. This
apprehension might be the result of what Zemon-Gass and Nichols (1975) refer to as the "take me along" marital syndrome, "a pervasive pattern in which men derive their identity and submerge their personalities in their occupational pursuits and women's identity is contingent upon their husband's" (p. 209). The physician and his wife provide an observable example of the identity-work-marriage web. Fowlkes (1980), in her study of academic and medical wives and their double-duty work as mother and homemaker, determined that the medical wife's role consists of subordination to her husband's career and to his professional and personal dominance and authority. She states:

The latent function of women's roles as homemakers and mothers is that of acting as a deterrent to the career aspirations of women, and this works to the advantage of men. A man with a career-free wife at home faces no interference with the expected mobility patterns or timetables of his career; nor does he have to cope with competing claims for time in which to do the day-to-day work of his career, neither does he come home to a partner at the end of the day whose activities outside the home take up and demand equal time with his own. The wife who is free to give her best in lending support is the wife who is free of major or serious preoccupations with her own work and who feels herself qualitatively or quantitatively rewarded by her husbands career and the life-style it entails (p. 174).

There are similarities between an athlete's wife and a physician's wife but there is only minimal research that investigates how wives of athletes define their role.
Crute (1981) concluded that there was unequal power in the relationship between an athlete and his wife and that for these wives, accommodating seems easier than negotiating change. In two surveys conducted regarding the career and life transition needs of National Hockey League players and their spouses it was determined that about 85 percent of the wives stated that supporting their husbands’ playing career was their most important current role (Blann, 1987).

Many athletes are celebrities. Through their work with celebrity families Cronson and Mitchell (1987) have noted:

The celebrity spouse assumes the role of enabler because, through her efforts, the celebrity is left free to devote himself to his career and reap ample financial and social rewards for the entire family. She shields the celebrity from the day-to-day issues of childrearing and home management" (p. 238).

Parr (1976) concluded that, from her 30 interviews with wives of "superstars," 29 were "accommodators." And while some wives run the business affairs of their husbands; Green (1978) observed that maybe the most important job of a pro golfer’s wife is to just be available when he needs her, to comfort him after a bad round, and to celebrate with him after a good one. This observation may relate to the findings of Cronson and Mitchell (1987) who have determined that professional athletes in individual sports, such as golf, seem to have less stability in their lives and probably face more stress in maintaining a balance
between family life and a career than those who play team sports.

During an interview of several baseball players' wives on the TODAY Show (August 28, 1986) Tonia Moore described how she accommodated her husband: "I do his shopping, I buy his clothes, I know how to dress him. I do everything for him just about except pitch." During the same interview Patty Sutton related that, not only did she have to learn to be in the shadow of her celebrity husband but that, each year during the off-season, she had to take a back seat when her husband wanted to resume being the head of the home and father again. This same situation, which was called the "October Phenomenon," was mentioned by Bouton and Marshall (1983).

When Ryan and Richard (1973) examined the pressures on the family of professional football players they noted the "transfer of power" at the end of the playing season as well as the dependence upon their husbands that some wives felt. Sammon (1977) determined that it was the job of the wives to protect their husbands from outside distractions before a game.

Retirement

Most individuals look forward to retirement. But for the professional athlete, it is often different. His socialization into sport began at an early age and his
intensity and commitment to sport often increased with time. As noted by Rozin (1979) "His sport has not only been his means of making a living, it has been the nucleus of his life, the point around which all decisions have been made" (p. 266). The early commitment to sport is usually reinforced by significant others (coaches, parents, peers) and the young athlete receives attention and prestige. A definition of self and ego as an athlete is often reinforced on the college and professional level, and may lead to athletes using performance as a basis for their self-esteem (McPherson, 1976). This basis for their self-esteem may be further intensified on the professional level as athletes who "make it" to the pros realize what a small minority they are in: Less than one percent of those competing in college football or basketball will sign a NFL or NBA contract (Ogilvie and Howe, 1986) and only two percent of college players from all sports will sign a professional contract (Stanton, 1987). According to the PGA tour office (personal communication, October 24, 1990) there are only about 350 men who are regular tour players.

Commenting on their careers in the NFL, Klecko and Fields (1989) noted

the deep physical and psychological investment players make in order to succeed in the sport. It's not a simple pasttime; the game is a source of identity and self-respect. It's intense. It forces a man to stretch to find his limits. It has all the properties of a meaningful career except one -- longevity" (p. 179).
The degree to which an athlete uses the athletic role to derive an identity determines the severity of the identity crisis they will face at termination (Ogilvie and Howe, 1986). Kramer (1969) questioned whether or not he would need the ego-gratification to survive when he retired and Bouton and Marshall, (1983) mentioned that for an athlete to retire it’s not retiring from a job, but rather it’s retiring from life.

Many athletes are not prepared for the occupational, financial, or psychological changes they may face in retirement. Nixon (1984) commented:

Anxiety about the future and the sudden loss of status and social identity may combine to create serious personality disturbances in former professional athletes. In fact, there are cases of such athletes who have been arrested for a variety of criminal offenses, become alcoholic and drug addicts, and committed suicide or attempted it (p. 182).

Suicide (caused from either performance or retirement issues) accounts for almost two percent of the known deaths in baseball, which is about double the average American suicide rate for adult males (Dolson, 1989).

All professional athletes must deal with the eventuality of retirement. As the end to his playing career starts to become evident, an athlete may decide he has "too much invested to quit" (Teger, 1980) and will attempt to "make still further investments in an attempt to salvage it" (p. 5). He may spend more time training or
working out in hopes of regaining some of his skills in order to compete better with younger players.

Retirement can be voluntary but most often it is involuntary (Rosenberg, 1987). While there are many reasons that can cause the termination of an athletic career it is usually related to one of three factors: the selection process, chronological age/declining ability, and injury (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Underlying these three factors is the issue of uncertainty; it is impossible to predict to what degree athletic ability will decline, or when or if a player will become injured.

Following both injury (Rotella & Heyman, 1986) and prospect of retirement (Rosenberg, 1987), athletes may experience a sequence of psychological reactions similar to those described by Kubler-Ross (1969) in her book *On Death and Dying*. These reactions included: 1) denial, disbelief, and isolation; 2) anger; 3) bargaining; 4) depression; 5) resignation and acceptance. Even though there appears to be a lack of empirical testing utilizing the concepts of this theory, it is easy to understand that it may be appropriate to use when investigating or explaining the reactions of athletes to retirement.

When a professional athlete does retire he is often faced with such issues a social death, finances, a shift in values, second-career options, and the lasting results of injury. The social death or isolation "is a process that
occurs not only within the person, but also between the individual and the social system to which he belongs" (Reynolds, 1981, p. 129). The athlete must face loss of social status, not only from the public but from his peers and sometimes his family as well (Rodriquez, 1980). His self-concept has often been from a physical viewpoint and now he must contemplate himself outside of sport.

Finances may also be a problem in retirement. A retired athlete, especially one without a college degree, must determine how to support himself, his wife and family. Some athletes have invested wisely and, if they qualify, will have retirement benefits. Even so, they will probably not produce the income they enjoyed during their active, playing years. Although the PGA does not keep statistics on this subject, the NFLPA reported to this researcher (personal communication, October 23, 1990) that the average salary for an NFL player for 1990 is $360,000 with an average playing career expectancy of four years. The NBAPA stated (personal communication, October 24, 1990) that the average 1989-90 salary was $650,000 with a four-year playing career expectancy for a NBA player. Most athletes cannot realize that great an income after retirement and may become overwhelmed by the financial pressures brought on by their termination.

When sport no longer dominates their lives, athletes are often forced to become introspective. As a result,
their priorities frequently change. Ogilvie and Howe (1986) reported that when a group of retired (and/or terminated) athletes were asked to rank a number of psychosocial issues first as they would have as participating athletes, and then as retirees, their answers were as follows (p. 373):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As Athletes</th>
<th>As Retirees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to be first</td>
<td>family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 travel</td>
<td>friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 friends</td>
<td>to be first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 family</td>
<td>quiet job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 money</td>
<td>money</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 contacts</td>
<td>travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 quiet job</td>
<td>fortune</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 fortune</td>
<td>contacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses indicate an increased valuation of family life which ultimately could have positive effects on the families of athletes after retirement.

Finding a second career is often difficult for the professional athlete and many of them discover that they are unable to match the material and psychological rewards of sport after their playing days are over (Nixon, 1984). Those who have not acquired a college degree are faced with limited resources and options. As reported by Michoces (1988) the NFL Players Association surveyed 645 retired
players who were asked about their lives since retirement. Results indicated "that, for many, NFL glory is replaced by job hopping, emotional and money problems and lingering injuries" (p. 12C). Those who retired after 1970 were more likely to have problems than those who played pre-1970. According to the NFLPA, a possible explanation for the differences in pre- and post-1970 retirees may be that pre-1970 players did not view professional ball as a career. It is often difficult for a retired athlete to define his skills that are transferable to areas outside of sport and to become resocialized into new occupational areas.

Many athletes carry injuries they received while playing into retirement. Severity of injury differs among sports, but many athletes will feel the physical effects of competition throughout their life span. Groves (1989) reported:

Sixty percent of the former players who responded to a Los Angeles Times survey thought that the NFL was not genuinely interested in their well being (neither long- or short-term); 53% felt that their best health interest had at some point been compromised by a team physician; and 78% directly associated some current physical disability with playing football (p. 170).

Professional athletes involved in non-contact sports are not faced with the prospect of debilitating or life-threatening injuries that confront those athletes in
contact sports. However, even those that might not be considered major injuries can be detrimental and could influence the life of the retired athlete. Arthritis and its related ailments caused by intensive "wear and tear," as well as more traumatic bodily injuries, could have effects on the second career choice, the leisure activities of middle age and those of later years, and possibly even medical insurance coverage of the retired athlete.

There are several studies that relate to professional athletic retirement. In a study of former football players forced to retire early, Lide (1981) concluded that, while eventually the group adjusted in a fairly successful manner, "the initial period immediately after retirement is a traumatic experience for most" (p. 166). Crute (1981) noted that the time constraints of professional sport operate to obstruct systematic planning for the future. As stated by Crute:

If retirement is discussed at all, it tends to be framed in structural terms rather than discussing the social, psychological and economic impact on the wife, the family, and of course, the husband (p. 282).

Coakley (1983) determined that, while there is more knowledge about former professional athletes than there is at other levels of sport participation, confusion exists about the dynamics of the retirement process. Coakley questioned the representatives of each sample in several
studies but concluded that leaving sport is not inevitably identity-shaking or stressful: When adjustment problems do exist they are most likely among former athletes:

1. whose sport careers have seriously restricted the development of credentials and attributes that others like them were able to form in coping with normal developmental tasks through life.

2. whose relationships have been restricted to other athletes, involving interaction based primarily on sport-related issues and activities;

3. whose families have provided little social and emotional support for any involvement outside the physical dimensions of sport activity;

4. whose backgrounds have provided little access to activity alternatives and role models outside of sport;

5. whose lack of material resources and social contacts have restricted their transitions into careers, expressive nonsport relationships, and satisfying leisure activities (p. 9).

Summary of the Review of Literature

This literature review has focused on several sources of both empirical studies and popular sport literature in the areas of occupational stress on families, role concept, and retirement. Through these sources the reader may begin to understand, or be provided with a source for ideas, as to how professional sport may affect the wives and families of professional athletes.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The discussion of the methodology for this research project will focus on the interview technique, subject selection, the interview process and data analysis.

The Interview Technique

The interview guide approach was the primary technique utilized for this research. This method was selected because of the scarcity of research in this area and because an intensive personal interview can elicit rich data for qualitative analysis. As suggested by Filstead (1970), "Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to 'get close to the data,' thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation from the data itself -- rather than from the preconceived, rigidly structured and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed" (p. 6). And according to Sage (1989) qualitative methods have proven to be especially applicable where gender and women’s issues are topics of inquiry because significant experiences in women’s lives are subtle and context-bound,
"the very sorts of phenomena that are better illuminated by qualitative than quantitative approaches" (Grant, Ward and Rong, 1987, p. 856).

In discussing interviewing as a means to study sensitive topics, Crano and Brewer (1973) stated that "scientific respectability is not defined by the particular method by which data are collected, but rather by the appropriateness of these techniques to the specific research setting in which they are employed" (p. 166). This researcher believed that a face-to-face guided interview was the best method to use to explore, and subsequently describe, the effects of their husbands' occupation on this particular group of wives.

According to Gorden (1980), in order to accomplish the basic task of the interview (maximizing the flow of valid and relevant information) the interviewer "must maintain optimal interpersonal relations between himself and the respondent" (p. 118). One method of building good interviewer-respondent interaction is by the establishment of rapport (Cannell & Kahn, 1953; Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954; Crano and Brewer, 1973). Rapport has been referred to as "the interviewer's contribution to respondent motivation" (Cannell & Kahn, p. 356). It is presumed that the more rapport (i.e., favorable climate and relationship) that is established, the more valid and complete will be the answers given by the respondent.
Because the quality of the elicited data is dependent upon the willingness of the respondent, Cannell and Kahn (1953) defined the role the interviewer plays in establishing rapport. They stated:

An individual is motivated to communicate with another when he receives gratification from the communication process and the personal relationship. Such motivation sometimes occurs because the interview offers the respondent an opportunity to talk about topics in which he is interested but which usually do not obtain adequate expression. This does not imply that the respondent in a research interview ordinarily obtains cathartic release (although this may be present at times). It does mean, however, that the respondent obtains satisfaction from talking with a receptive, understanding interviewer about something in which he is interested and in which he is involved (p. 337).

In addition to offering a respondent an opportunity to discuss a topic of known interest, the interview has the potential to act as an ego builder. The respondent has access to needed information and may feel special or famous because he/she was asked to participate in the interview process (Gorden, 1980).

While in-depth personal interviews can produce rich data for analysis, it is important to be aware of the limitations inherent in this method of research. Filstead (1970) suggested that each interviewer is stereotyped by the respondent and, therefore, the interviewee may adjust his answers to those perceived as "right" by the researcher. Carlsmith, Ellsworth, and Aronson (1976), while suggesting that the mere presence of an interviewer
can stimulate the subject to respond in a honest manner, state that there are three main problems with verbal measures. Included are: (1) they are measures of what the subjects say about themselves; (2) the subjects almost always know that something about themselves is being measured at that moment; and (3) the verbal measure is less involving (subjects have time for the sort of rumination that might lead to distortion of answers) (pp. 196-197).

Certain measures can be employed in attempts to assure maximum validity when acquiring data through the interview process. A pilot study (pretest) of the interview instrument can determine if questions are easily understood and that no important topics have been inadvertently omitted. Emotional responses to subject matter can also be noted by the interviewer. In addition, use of a tape recorder allows the investigator to transcribe accurately what was said at an interview and thereby maintain accuracy in data reporting. Taping also allows the interviewer the opportunity to analyze his/her own interviewing techniques. All four of these measures were utilized in the attempt to assure maximum validity in the study.

Selection of Subjects

When attempting to approach or gain access to individuals of celebrity status (as is the case of many athletes and their families) one must be aware of the
"gatekeeper." The gatekeeper, as defined by Crano and Brewer (1973), is "an individual who holds either formal or informal power over the respondent's decision to cooperate with the interviewer" (p. 181). In the case of this research endeavor, the "gatekeepers" were the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Football League (NFL), the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA), and the Professional Golf Association (PGA). Because these professional associations will not release addresses or telephone numbers of the athletes, a letter was sent to the executive director of each organization describing the research project and seeking information about methods of gaining access to wives. The NFLPA, the NBA and the PGA all responded with a phone call or letter declaring interest in the project and offering recommendations. There was no response from the NFL.

Ultimately, the procedure for contacting basketball and football wives differed from that of contacting golf wives. After formulating a letter and response form (see Appendix A & B) to be sent to the wives, this researcher called various NFL or NBA team offices and asked to speak with the individual in charge of player relations. After hearing an explanation of the research project, each team contact (with the exception of one NFL team) agreed to forward the letters, response forms, and return envelopes to the wives. Team media guides were reviewed to identify
which players were married and have children. Using a purposeful sampling strategy, specifically maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1980), letters were sent to wives who were diverse in age, race, probable length of time in sport and parenthood status. Even though this strategy does not promote generalization, it does expand the utilization of information obtained from small samples. By increasing the amount of available information, the investigator can note both common patterns and unique variations in data.

Wives of professional golfers were contacted directly. Through the assistance of two golfers’ wives, the letters and response forms were either hand delivered at a golf tournament or mailed to the home address of the wives.

An additional list of names of wives who might be interested in participating was generated from suggestions from the wives on the response form. The percentages of returned forms indicating a willingness to participate in the project were as follows: basketball, 27%; football, 44%; and golf, 40%. From the population of respondents, a sample was selected to maximize the variations in age, race, marriage status, length of marriage, and number of children.

Thirty-one subjects were selected, 11 golf and 11 football wives and 9 basketball wives. The husbands, or former husbands, of these football and basketball wives are
either current or former players from six NFL teams and three NBA teams. Many of the players’ wives had experienced their husband’s being professionally traded, some several times. Six of the players are now retired. The husbands of the golf wives are all active, touring professional golfers.

Some demographic characteristics were over-represented in the initial pool of possible interviewees. To keep the sample diversified, it was necessary to limit the number of wives who responded whose husbands had achieved superstar status.

**The Interview Process**

**Interview Period**

The interview period for this research project extended from August 1988, to October, 1989. Two factors contributed to this prolonged time interval. Extensive travel was necessary to conduct these interviews, and access to football and basketball wives was easier during the playing season. During the off-season, families of professional athletes often live in different locations or travel frequently, which makes contact or availability difficult.

**Interview Setting**

The interviews were conducted in 10 major metropolitan areas throughout the United States. Most took place in the
homes of participants. However, on certain occasions it was necessary to meet in hotels, restaurants, an airport or at a work location.

Most interviews were obtained in quiet settings. Occasionally there were interruptions from children or ringing telephones but these minor disruptions did not noticeably hinder the interview process. Interviews generally lasted between one and a half and two hours.

The Interview

The general interview guide approach was utilized to obtain the data. As suggested by Patton (1980), the interview guideline should provide a framework within which the interviewer can develop and sequence questions, and decide which areas of information to pursue in greater detail. The interview guide approach makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent and increases the comprehension of the data. Interviews tend to remain fairly conversational and situational, and gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. However, when using the interview guide approach, the interviewer needs to be aware that important topics may be unintentionally omitted. Also, substantially different replies can result from interview flexibility in sequencing and wording of questions, thus reducing the comparability of responses.
Patton (1980) defines six kinds of questions that can be asked during the interview process.

1. Experience/Behavior Questions
   These questions attempt to elicit descriptions of experiences, behaviors, actions, and activities.

2. Opinion/Value Questions
   These are questions aimed at determining what a person thinks about other individuals or situations.

3. Feeling Questions
   These questions are focused on understanding the emotional responses of people to their thoughts and experiences.

4. Knowledge Questions
   These questions are directed towards factual information - what is already known.

5. Sensory Questions
   These questions attempt to have an individual describe the stimuli to which he/she is subject - what is heard, seen, tasted, touched, and smelled.

6. Background/Demographic Questions
   These are questions aimed at identifying characteristics of the interviewee (i.e., age, education, marriage status).

The ordering of the interview questions plays a part in the establishment of rapport between the interviewer and
respondent. Generally, the least demanding, least threatening, most general and easily answered questions are introduced first. Later, once cooperation has been assured, and the confidence of the respondent in the integrity of the interviewer is well established, more difficult, specific, private and/or personal information may be requested (Crano and Brewer, 1973; p. 186). During the interviews for this study background/demographic questions were asked first, followed by knowledge questions. More difficult and private and personal inquiries were then made through experience/behavior, opinion/value, and feeling questions. Sensory questions were not utilized.

In addition to obtaining information about the personal background of the subjects, the interview guide was developed to evoke data that would answer the research questions of this project. The following questions became the basis of each interview.

Marriage History

How did you meet your husband? What attracted you to him? How did the fact that he was an athlete influence you? Describe your dating pattern — how long, how often you saw him, how long was your engagement period? Ages at the time of marriage? How many years had he been a professional athlete when you married? Describe your life/career at the time of your marriage. Is this your first marriage? His? How long have you been married?
Occupational Impact

At the time of your marriage how much knowledge/understanding did you have of your husband’s sport?
What is it like being the wife of a professional athlete?
What tensions and frustrations do you experience most frequently?
What do you like most about being married to an athlete?
How does the threat of injury affect you and/or your marriage?
Your husband is frequently in the public eye. What effects does this have upon you? Upon him?
What are your concerns when your husband is on a road trip? Loneliness? Availability of other women to athletes?
What is your parent’s attitude toward your husband’s occupation? (His parent’s?)
Could you comment on any differences in life-style during the season and off-season. Do you change residence?
Travel on road trips?
Who do you socialize with the most?

Role Concept

If asked to describe yourself, what would you say?
What is your primary role? How do you feel about this role?
Do you work outside your home? Why/why not? Does your husband object to your working?
As the wife of an athlete are there certain "behavior codes" that you follow? Please explain.
What qualities are important to have as the wife of a professional athlete?
How has your husband’s job changed you? How do you feel about this?
What are your activities and interests outside the home? Are they influenced by the seasonal aspect of your husband’s profession?
Many athletes are reported to have big and sometimes fragile egos. Do you believe this to be true? Has this affected your own identity?
Rank, by importance to you your 5 or 6 most significant values.

FOR WIVES WHO ARE MOTHERS:

How does your husband’s occupation affect your role as a parent?
How do your children perceive their father’s job as a professional athlete?
Retirement

What plans have you and your husband made for the future? What are your concerns about his retirement. How has the professional association or the player's association helped you plan for your future retirement? How will you be affected by your husband's career change? How do you see yourself 10 years from now?

The interview guide was pretested on two wives of former professional athletes. After corrections and additions were made, the instrument was used for the guided interview (see Appendix C).

Through telephone contact, the time and place for the interview, was established. Prior to beginning the interview the confidential nature of the study was emphasized and the process for protecting the anonymity of the subjects was explained. A consent form, developed from the guidelines of Lincoln and Guba (1985) was explained to the interviewee. Each subject was then asked to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix D). The interviewee was given the opportunity to ask questions about the credentials of the researcher or about any facet of the study. The guided interview was explained and subjects were encouraged to elaborate on their answers if they desired to do so. Twenty-nine of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and two interviews, because of travel complications, were accomplished by telephone.

It is important to note the quality of the data elicited through the telephone interviews. Strong rapport
and trust was developed during the face-to-face interviews, so this researcher was concerned that a warm and friendly atmosphere could not be created via telephone. However, taking time for personal self-disclosure by this researcher (number and ages of children, length of time married, educational interests, etc.), before the interview began, seemed to alleviate any shyness or restraint that the interviewees may have experienced. This researcher perceived that the telephone interviews were as successful as the face-to-face interviews.

Recording of Data

Each interview was tape recorded. This method was used to eliminate extensive writing and to assure accurate reporting of responses. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this procedure has many advantages such as assuring completeness; providing an unimpeachable data source; and providing opportunities to review the material as often as necessary to assure that full understanding has been achieved. Additional tapes and batteries were taken to each interview in case of mechanical difficulties.

The period of time after the interview is critical because "it is a time of quality control to guarantee that the data obtained will be useful, reliable, and valid" (Patton, 1980; p. 251). This researcher spent several hours after each interview reviewing the tapes making
notes and recording observations. Nonverbal cues, as mentioned by Patton (1980) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) were also noted. Initial thoughts and perceptions of this researcher were tape recorded, followed by more extensive notes written in journal form.

**Data Analysis**

THE ETHNOGRAPH, a set of menu-driven computer programs, was utilized to help with the mechanical aspects of the qualitative data analysis. Each tape-recorded interview was transcribed into typed copy. When transcribed, each participant was referred to by a letter and a number (i.e., B-4, G-7, F-2) and all names were removed from the text. In addition, to help maintain anonymity, all husbands' and teams' names were removed.

Every attempt was made to keep the identity of the participants anonymous. No list of those taking part in the study has been or will be available outside the use of the researcher for this project.

After the interviews were transcribed, they were coded by topic areas. There were 55 topic areas identified. Data were then sorted and retrieved through the use of THE ETHNOGRAPH. Summaries of participants' responses to questions in the different topic areas were analyzed. Emerging trends and response patterns were noted and, subsequently, became the foundation for the organization
and presentation of the data. Quotations from the participants were used to support the data.
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION AND SUMMARIES OF THE DATA

DEMOGRAPHICS

Thirty-one women, whose husbands are either active or retired professional golfers, basketball, or football players were interviewed. Their ages ranged from 22 years to 43 years with a mean of 30.2 years and a median of 30 years.

All of the women have obtained some college experience, ranging from 1 semester to a Ph.D. Within the group, 14 acquired an undergraduate degree, and two had nearly completed their degrees. One woman attained a master's degree, one a Ph.D., and one a Juris Doctorate. Among the remaining women, nine attended college for 2 years, two attended for 1 year and one attended for 1 semester.

At some time during the high school or college experience every woman participated in some form of extracurricular activity. These activities were varied, and, with one anomaly, indicated no emerging patterns. In regards to the exception, 16 of the wives were cheerleaders at some point in time, and nine of those 16 were wives of golfers.
Twenty-four of the wives have children. The children ranged from age 4 months to 21 years. Six wives were pregnant, 3 for the first time. Four wives had no children.

Among the 31 women, eight were black and there were two interracial marriages. Nine of the wives worked outside of the home, three full-time and six part-time. Six of the husbands have retired from professional sport.

Marriage Background

The length of engagements of the 31 women in the study ranged from no formal or a very short engagement to being engaged for four years. Their ages at the time of marriage ranged from 20 years to 29 years with a mean of 23.4 years. The mean of the number of years the subjects had been married was 6.8 years, with a median of 6 years and a range from 8 months to 21 years. At the time of the study, 28 of the wives and husbands had been married once, including one who was divorced and one who was separated. Of the three remaining participants, it was a second marriage for one wife and the first for her husband, the first for one wife and the second for her husband, and a second marriage for both the wife and husband.

There was a variety of responses as to where they had met their husbands (bars, restaurants, blind dates, parties, athletic events); 14 of the wives met their
husbands while in college. As one wife stated:

It seems like a lot of the people I’ve met in sports, many of the guys end up marrying their college sweetheart or someone they have known for a long time - that this person knew them before he became this famous athlete. I think that once you start playing you see all the things that are going on and how people try to take advantage of you. You have to think who your real friends are and who really likes you for you. You get to the point where you can’t trust anybody because everybody wants something from you (F7).

Attraction

When discussing their attraction to their future husbands, the wives were equally divided on the initial positive and negative influence of athletics. Positive responses included:

Of course I can’t deny I was attracted to the fact that he was on the team. At that time I was pretty ignorant about what that would be about. I just knew that I was from this area and my father was like a maniac (team) fan my whole life and the thought of going out with a (team) was pretty exciting (F5).

Actually, the golf had to have attracted me in some way, maybe it’s parental. Now that I’m thinking about it, my parents absolutely loved golf. It’s part of my blood (G4).

I think it did. Not that I was interested in athletes per se. He sparked my interest with his personality and then the fact, I think on top of that, that he was a very good athlete (B4).

Negative comments included:

I didn’t know that he was even an athlete until maybe two or three days later and then once I found out it was .... I don’t want to say a turn off, but I didn’t know how to react to that. I’d
met professional athletes before, but I always stereotyped them. I didn’t know if he was being nice to me for one reason, if you know what I mean. I didn’t know how to handle it (F1).

I wasn’t really attracted to him and I just had this idea in my mind of the stereotypical type of athlete. Because it seemed like most athletes were very egotistical and I just figured that he would be (B3).

It almost influenced me to walk in the other direction. My brothers were all athletes and I was a cheerleader so I’m well aware of the profile of the athlete. I never really had been attracted to the type because of the responsibility factor. So I was almost influenced in the other direction. In a lot of ways I had to be convinced that he wasn’t like the typical athlete (B6).

Dating Patterns

Dating patterns varied among the 31 couples. Time spent together was influenced by the husband’s stage of life when they started dating (student or professional athlete) and by the sport that the husband played. The majority of those wives who met their husbands while in school experienced traditional dating patterns.

We saw each other every single night for seven months and we were engaged for six months. We studied together, we worked together, supported each other, and every spare moment we were together (F3).

It was pretty normal dating. We dated almost 4 1/2 years (F7).

We’d try to see each other as much as possible but you know he’d have games and there were times when we couldn’t see each other. We spent a decent amount of time together, I’d say probably 3 or 4 times a week at least (B5).
The whole time I was in school we dated and we saw each other fairly often. But he was gone a lot with his golf. During the week we would try to see each other but I didn’t see him a lot on the weekends (G6).

However, there appeared to be more accommodation to sport for those dating professional athletes. This was especially evident for those dating professional golfers.

We did 2 1/2 years of long-distance. We saw each other when he would take a week off from golf or I’d take a week-long vacation. We did that for 2 1/2 years and then I moved down here and we lived together for a year (G2).

In January, I went out on tour and quit my job. That was it. That was a big step for me, to quit my job and go. It’s giving up all your independence. But that was the only way we could really carry on a relationship (G3).

I think from the beginning our dating life was sporadic, based on golf (G8).

He was always out of town going to tournaments and I was busy with college. We didn’t believe in traveling together before we got married so we never did that. We were engaged for an entire year and at one point I didn’t see him for 3 months (G9).

Life/Career At Time of Marriage

When asked to describe their life/career at the time of marriage, 11 of the women were working or had just stopped working to plan their wedding. Four of the women were still in college and three had just graduated. Several were not working but job hunting. Eleven of the wives lived with their husbands prior to their marriage. In most
instances this was done to accommodate the husband’s work schedule or profession. Typical in this respect:

I had to quit my job and go to (city). In retrospect he supported me until we got married because he didn’t want me to work. We spent a lot of time traveling and going different places because that was his off-season (F1).

It was hectic. I was working at the time so it was really crazy. I did a lot of traveling for my job so it was crazy. It is one of the reasons I moved here with him when we decided or talked about getting married. We’d been back and forth for so long between cities. I thought, how do you really know? It’s been wonderful, but we would only see each other 3 or 4 days at a time, a week at the longest. I thought I don’t know, it could be a very unrealistic picture (F2).

Several of the wives decided to either give up or put their own careers or education on hold. Three of these wives stated:

At the time we were married I wasn’t working. I had been but I stopped when I left to move with him (B9).

I was attending school and he was in (city). I decided I was going to quit school and move up there with him. My mother didn’t approve (F8).

Before I knew we were going to get married I wanted to go into counseling. When (husband) asked me to marry him and he told me he was going to be a professional golfer I just knew I couldn’t go into that (counseling). There’s just no way you can stay home and maintain a marriage, miles apart. So I decided well, I’ll just forego my plans and just follow him (G5).
Summary

In summarizing the background of the marriages it was found that almost one half of the wives in the study met their husbands while still in school and prior to his becoming a professional sports figure. Comments on the initial positive and negative influence of athletics were equal when the wives discussed their attraction to their future husband. Parental views may have influenced positive perceptions, and stereotyping may have influenced negative perceptions.

More traditional dating patterns occurred if the couple met while still in school. However, if the athlete had already turned professional then the dating patterns varied to accommodate the sport. This was particularly true for those dating golfers. At the time of their marriage the majority of women were either working, were still in college, or had just graduated. It appeared that approximately one third of the wives lived with their husbands prior to marriage to accommodate his work schedule or profession.

**Occupational Impact**

Knowledge of the Sport

When discussing how much knowledge and understanding the wives had of their husband’s sport at the time of their marriage the responses ranged from:
I didn’t know anything about golf. You know, when I met (husband), I didn’t even know what he did. When I got engaged and married it was still a big question mark. All I knew is I wouldn’t have to work (G11).

to the statement by F10,

I felt like I had pretty much knowledge of football because I’d been here for a year of it. I feel like I had a pretty good understanding of what it was going to entail.

The majority of wives said they knew about the actual sport but didn’t have much knowledge about the life-style.

Representative of this group is F1.

What I didn’t know was that . . . how much of a business that it was. You tend to look at it from a fan’s standpoint and it is so business oriented. So a lot of it can be very political which was a down side for me. It would be like going to Disney World and seeing Mickey without his head on. You want to believe that everything is just wonderful, and the fans are great, and the team gets along and the owners are terrific. But it’s a business like everything else.

In agreement were G3 and G1.

It’s like getting married or having children . . . you don’t really know until you’re in it. And I was like a fruit loop the first four weeks. I thought "this is what I do?" I get up in the morning, I iron his clothes so he can go play golf, and then I go out and follow him around the golf course. I come in and we eat and we get up the next morning and then I can do loads of wash at the hotel’s washeteria, and then you eat out, but you’re watching money. It’s like eating at Sambo’s was a treat, you know. I had more McDonald’s "Big Breakfasts" than I ever care to imagine. I certainly didn’t have any real conception (G3).
I would say I knew, but not as much as you need to know. You don’t know enough about it until you actually go out there and do it. I don’t think my husband knew what to expect either, because the first year we were sort of lost, like a lot of other people. They need something to ... I think probably with all sports, to like introduce that life-style. Like a prep course (G1).

Life as a Wife of a Professional Athlete

When discussing what it is like to be the wife of a professional athlete most of the wives agreed that, like all professions, it has both its good and bad points. Topics focused on what aspects the wives liked most and what were their greatest tensions and frustrations.

When asked to describe what they liked most, the responses included an exciting life-style, meeting new people, special privileges and an opportunity to watch their husbands work. However, three basic patterns emerged. First, a significant number of football and basketball wives stated that money or financial freedom ranks at the top of the positive aspects of their husbands being in professional sports. Responses included:

The money, the freedom it’s given us. That’s the only good part about it (F11).

Well, the money. The money’s a definite positive. The exposure. There’s so much exposure (B1).

It affords you time to do a lot of things and the money to do it with (F2).

The money. At this point I can’t think of anything else, other than it’s exciting (F5).
The good side is the money (B7).

Well, the best part is that it is nice to have nice things (B3).

Second, the majority of golf wives found travel opportunities to be the most positive aspect. Comments included:

I like the traveling, I like going to different places and seeing things, and when we get into a town and find out what there is to do and go do it (G5).

The traveling is one of the most fun things I’ve known. I always try and soak it in and look everywhere and just breathe it in (G9).

You get to see so much of the country and your life doesn’t get boring (G1).

Well, the positive is we’ve met so many people, gone so many places that I never would have gone. I guess just the opportunity that it provides (G6).

The third pattern that emerged identified the advantages of the off-season. Because golf wives don’t experience an off-season, these views were expressed predominantly by basketball wives, with a few football wives agreeing.

Having our summers free. I mean people say "how long are you on vacation for?" And you just say "five months" and they just kind of look at you like ... I have to admit it's really a wonderful life to do something you really enjoy (B2).

The best part is the off-season because he doesn’t have to go in to work, and I’m going to miss that. We’ve been lucky, he always plays in January. But really, from February to May you can kind of do exactly what you want to do, if you
choose to do it. I think that’s the neat part and they deserve that. And the families deserve that. We deserve to have them back for that little bit of time (F6).

The description by B5 also fits this pattern.

I can’t think of any reason why someone would pick this. Nothing. I mean you could look at the monetary thing of it, but that to me is not enough to make you want to become part of it. I suppose to some women they would say you know it’s fun to meet special people or this or that or the other thing. That’s not really me. I don’t really care about all that stuff. All these All Star games and stuff, like I just feel inferior to everybody there so that doesn’t do me a lot of good. I think the best thing that I probably could come up with . . . one reason why this is a good life-style is because it makes (husband) so happy. Anything that makes your husband happy is bound to make your family life happy and make you happy. I mean it’s really fun to see him doing something that he enjoys so much. But as far as for me to have a best part . . . the best part is probably the off-season. Literally, probably the best part for me.

While it was not prevalent, some wives did mention prestige and the opportunity to watch their husbands work as aspects of their husbands’ job that they most enjoyed. Comments by F10 and F7 are good examples.

Probably the prestige and the opportunity to do a lot of different things that I probably would never have been able to have done. Like going to the White House or going to Hawaii for free. You know, just things in your normal life you don’t get to do (F10).

I think the fun thing for me, because I love my husband, I get to watch him do his job. Wives who are married to doctors don’t get to watch him do operations or don’t go into every courtroom when your married to a lawyer. It’s like I get to see
(husband) perform and it’s fun to watch. It’s fun to watch when you know that person and you care about them (F7).

During discussions pertaining to the tensions and frustrations the wives experienced with their husbands’ profession, many topics were mentioned. Included were the press, groupies, lack of time together and parenting issues. However, three trends in the responses have been noted, each with equal frequency. An additional trend, the tension resulting from the fear of injury, will be discussed as a separate section.

The topic of feeling used by the public was mentioned by all three groups, but especially by basketball wives. Representative of the group:

People expect a lot. Like pushy people who say "your husband plays professional football, he owes it to this organization to come and speak to them." During the Super Bowl year we had a lot of very pushy people doing that and I simply told them that he hasn’t spent one night with his family and his family is his number one priority. And they told me "no, his community should be his number one priority." People expect him to give, and he does give, but family is the number one priority (F3).

The negative side is the high visibility. And because there’s a lot of money involved, there are a lot of people that want to get to know you and that has to do with the high visibility, too. There’s a lot of people that want to leech and want to hang on and want to get to know you. Or those people might have bad influences on you. Basketball players have to be very, very strong individuals and be able to say no to a whole variety of things: to drugs, to going out and partying all the time, and to women (B1).
When you’re out in public places you have to be willing to share him. You can’t expect to have his undivided attention. There’s always people coming up (B3).

Well, it’s just that everybody wants a piece of you. People don’t realize that every single person wants a piece of you. But I looked at (husband) and said "but I want a piece of you too, but I don’t want just a little piece, I want a great big chunk. I want this nice big chunk of you to call my own." Just to be able to count on him to be here sometimes to do this or that, you know what I mean? But when you start getting torn in this direction and that direction, doing this and that for all of these other people it really, really wears on the family (B5).

Also representing this group is G9.

Sometimes I wish that I could be incognito almost. It’s not that my husband’s name is plastered all over every household wall but when you’re walking along the golf course people are quite brave and they come up and start talking. There are times it’s amazing how bugged I get in one day when I just want to watch.

While not an issue for wives of professional golfers, a tension noted among the other wives was the issue of job insecurity. This apprehension was experienced by basketball wives, but felt especially by the wives of football players.

Football wives identified their fears in the following statements.

There’s very little job security. Just because he has a contract doesn’t mean, it’s not a contract like what we know as a contract. (Husband) could be cut next year. Just because he has two years left on his contract doesn’t mean he’ll be paid
for those two years. It's a contract on management's part (F9).

You know, it's always there. It's always like hanging over your head. When you're gone you've got a mortgage, you've got a family to feed and... there's always that uncertainty. I mean that's probably the biggest, most negative thing about football... the uncertainty. And it's difficult to develop more stabilizing factors in your life because football sort of demands total allegiance and you can't get another job going (F11).

F11 also added:

If you're stuck on a losing team... (Husband) was on the (team's) crummy crummy years. He was dropped right before they went to the Super Bowl, so he didn't even get a ring. But you know, it breaks my heart, it really does. I feel like we paved the road to the Super Bowl with his body. But you know that's part... He was like broken-hearted. I'm just pissed about it because it was a business decision. All the decisions are business decisions. There's no regard for allegiance, the player's allegiance. People play 10 or 12 years and they're cut like that, without even a gold watch. I mean you don't get anything. It's like you go in and your locker is cleaned out. It's like "bye, who are you?" And there is no allegiance, not mutual at all. You pour your heart out, you lose your body, you've worked so hard for the team, and then when you're dispensable, it's just a one way street.

Also representative of the group:

I was coming home and saw that he was out cutting the grass. It was like 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon and I was shaking like a leaf. I pulled up in the driveway and I said "Oh my God, they've released him!" I didn't even turn the car off. I ran out and said "What are you doing home?" And he said "I'm cutting the grass." I asked him if anything had happened today and he said "No, why?" You're just on edge because you just don't know how things are going to go (F6).
Now this is a big negative of basketball. You have no control over your own fate. It’s just like we got traded from (team) and we had no say so. You know, it’s almost like you’re a piece of property (B1).

But you do what you have to do and we moved 11 times. Every time you try and get to be normal, like normal people and try and have as much of a normal life with your home and your kids in school -- it just never worked that way for us. The second you’d get normal something would happen and you’re uprooted again (B2).

The third trend identified dealt with the issue of travel. This was not an issue for football wives but was mentioned by a few basketball wives. Even though wives of golfers mentioned travel as the most positive aspect of their husband’s profession, it also seemed to cause the most tension or frustration.

A basketball wife noted:

The bad side is that sometimes you feel like you’re a single parent because they’re on the road a lot (B7).

A golf wife expressed her feelings this way:

You’re out (on tour) let’s say 3 or 4 weeks. If you don’t make the cut it’s so hard not to let it affect your life. They get frustrated and they work just two days that week. You’re in a city that’s not home and there are 5 days and you basically have to decide what you’re going to do. You didn’t make any money and besides that he’s really competitive and if he didn’t play good it means he’s unhappy. It’s really hard not to let it affect your life no matter how many times you tell yourself over and over that it doesn’t matter. It is still stressful on your marriage (G1).
Two wives who are not out on the tour stated:

I think the hardest thing about it is that you don’t have any control over your distant mate. It depends on how they play and it’s all on their shoulders. And that’s hard because there’s nothing you can do to physically help (G2).

I don’t like being away from home. It’s real hard. You don’t have a nice established routine. You’re constantly in a hotel. You can’t just lay down and be real comfortable and relaxed. You’re always trying to get here and then you always had to think a couple of weeks ahead, making reservations. I didn’t like not having something for me to do. I just felt like I was just his wife, just screwing around and I didn’t like that and I was starting to feel . . . I’d gone to school for 4 years and I felt like I was wasting my brain away (G6).

While it was not identified as a trend of primary importance when discussing their greatest tension or frustration, several wives suggested that their husbands were spoiled. One wife spoke openly about the issue.

They’re so spoiled, they’re so spoiled. They are who they are because they are told everything from pee-wee football to this level and sometimes it gets old. It just gets old being their mother. And I think this is a major complaint with most of the wives, it really is. And they don’t have to do anything that they don’t want to do. I’m not sure that Joe Blow on Wall Street’s wife has to deal with that. I just don’t think everybody’s husband is spoiled like this, not like the athlete (F6).

Another wife expressed her own frustration with her husband’s profession in this manner.
You know I think we’re all foolish if you think we’re going to be the priority in our husband’s lives everyday, twenty-four hours a day. However, I just want to win sometimes. I can’t be behind golf all the time. Yes, your career is demanding and, gosh, there are compensations for that demand, you know. It’s not easy, but I mean these people are afforded the chance to make $30 and $40,000 a week and that’s not even winning. So I think you say well, gee, it is demanding and gosh there are sacrifices. Yes, the payoff is fine, but how much is too much. I think what happens out there is you win a tournament then it’s like you need to win two tournaments. You need to win a major, of course. Well then you need to go overseas at the end of the year and capitalize on all that you won this year. And then there’s that "player of the year" thing and then of course there’s the money winner and then the trophy and it’s like you want to say "you know, get off." What is too much, what defines success? You know, what are you successful for? How much money do you really need? What can compensate for the years that you’re not with your child? (G8)

Threat of Injury

Threat of injury affected the wives from the three different sports very differently. Wives of golfers tended not to be too concerned with the issue. Some golfers are cautious and won’t go skiing or play tennis but others don’t curtail their other athletic activities. The following responses were typical of this group.

You can’t live in a bubble. You have to live your life and (husband) is better off mentally and physically if he can do other sports. He plays racquetball and tennis and he tries to play basketball. We went skiing in February and had a blast. Everybody says "no don’t do that, you’ll get hurt." And he’s like you know "leave me alone. I’ve skied all my life and I’m not going to get hurt now just because I play golf" (G2).
Life is too short. Golf is not number one in our lives. It's our living and (husband) loves it. He likes the game a lot but it will not control us (G9).

Basketball wives were equally divided in their concern over injuries. A few mentioned clauses in their husband's contract that wouldn't allow him to participate in skiing, skydiving, parachuting and sports of this nature. Those that worried were concerned about career-ending injuries as opposed to injuries that were very long term or life threatening. Others seemed not to be too apprehensive. Typical responses from the basketball wives included:

It definitely worries me. He plays a lot during the summer and during the year. And it's like during the Summer I prefer that he would not because he has the season coming up and it scares me that he could easily become injured. Even during the year, you know, like he's had two injuries, nothing major, basically minor injuries that have kept him out about a week to a month or so. It's very disturbing because, you know, sometimes when they have only, you know, their career could end just right there. And then especially . . . you know, I'm just saying some of them that don't have any schooling or whatever, they don't have too much to fall back on. And their contracts are short term (B9).

The statement by B6 represents the opposite viewpoint.

It's just one of those things that you deal with as you have to and it's unnecessary worry until it happens. So you give it to the back burner, and you know that and because of that, you try to get yourself in a position financially so that you don't get totally blown out of the water if it ever happens. It's something that you know possibly could happen, but you don't think about it. I hardly ever think about it. I don't think
that he spends time thinking about it. It’s not really useful thought. It’s more counter-productive than it is anything else.

Adding her own perspective was B8.

When they were injured, you would think they had lost a leg or something instead of maybe a sprain. Like he’d be a big baby and yet I knew that would play with his mind. You see so many people wrapped up in one. Knowing how much the career means and there was such a short life in the career, you worried. When you saw him go down you worried. It stayed in the back of your mind. You know, we’re not talking about little kids. They are adults.

Football wives identified a much greater concern for injury. While a few said that they try not to worry about it and they’ll deal with it if it happens, most football wives worried about injury a great deal. Representative of those who try not to worry is F9.

I don’t think about it. Obviously if he lays on the field a little bit longer, I wonder if he’s going to get up. But I don’t worry about it. Can’t sit at home and brood about it. But there’s all the nagging and things like, every week he puts ice on his ribs or ice on his knees. Ice is a cure-all for everything, ice, ice, ice, ice. But you can’t worry about it and you have to be mentally strong enough to know that if (husband) had an injury tomorrow that I could deal with it. His health would be more important than playing football. Everyone has to know that but when it happens, obviously it’s harder. But you have to know that you can’t sit around and worry about it. Because if it happens, you deal with it.
Most of the football wives expressed their worry about injury.

I want him to win and I want him to play good. But more than anything, I want him to stay healthy. Each game you just hope they come home all in one piece (F6).

It’s not fun to lose, but it’s a lot worse to see him hurt. A lot worse than anything. They’ve had games that they’ve won and he’s been hurt, so it was . . . the win didn’t even faze me. I couldn’t even enjoy it (F2).

Elaborating on the subject of injury, F1 described her feelings.

I’ve seen him play when he was younger and I’ve seen him play now and I can see over the years that the injuries don’t heal as fast. I think that’s just natural because of age and there’s not one day that goes by, in fact, you know I get nervous the day he leaves on the plane. I just start getting a little nervous because I know what can happen. I’ve seen injuries that can happen on the field and there’s no mercy out there. If you’ve watched any of the interviews with some of the players, I mean they’re out just practically to kill you. And my husband does play defense, which is not a long-lived position. He can’t play that position as long as an offensive player can play. So he does take a brutal beating and he does come home with bandages and sores. We’ve gone through an assortment of ankle and knee injuries where he’s hobbling around on crutches and casts and braces and all kinds of stuff. And my fear now is that since he is older, every injury that he’s probably going to get from here on out, he’s had before, and so it’s just going to compound the injury. It’s just not going to heal as quickly and of course it’s hard on him when they do get injured. I think I probably speak for a lot of the wives on the team when they get injured, it’s hard to sit on the sidelines and it’s hard not to play and it’s hard not to participate. Especially near the end of the season when the playoff games are coming and
that's what you work all year for. If they did go to the Super Bowl and if they won, but they weren't playing, how much satisfaction is that ring going to really hold? Being that they were not contributing in that particular game. So he gets very frustrated in that respect.

Loneliness and Availability of Other Women

On the issue of loneliness and availability of other women to athletes the great majority of women agreed that loneliness was not a problem. Extensive travel is not a problem for football wives and, with the exception of the few weeks in the summer when the husbands are in summer camp, long separations are not an issue. Many football wives used that period of time to catch up on housework or to go visit their families or friends.

While a few basketball and golf wives said that they didn't like to be alone in the house at night, and a few with small children felt more strain during husband's absences, most of these wives also seemed to enjoy their time alone. B1 and C7 represent this group.

But, somehow I don't feel lonely when he's gone. In fact, I look forward to some of those times because that's when my life is easiest. There's no home games, which makes my life harder because I have to get children ready and get myself ready and have to feed (husband) and make sure he's ready, and life is easier when he's on the road because there's no game to get ready for. There's no husband to cook dinner for and so I don't have to cook if I don't want to. The other side of that is that basketball doesn't last all year round, so that means that during the off season he's here all the time. So we have plenty of time to spend time together (B1).
I like my time by myself and I really enjoy our times apart. I enjoy it because it makes me happy to see him. Whereas I think if you're together all the time, it’s inevitable that you get on each other’s nerves in some way or another. So I like to miss him and he needs to miss me. He needs to be on his own and not have me always doing the motherly things, taking care of him. I never worry about him being unfaithful, because that’s just one of those rules (G7).

The issue of availability of other women caused greater concern. The majority of wives felt that they didn’t have to worry about their husbands being unfaithful, but most agreed that "groupies" are a problem, even if not for them. Several wives commented that they worried more about husbands' travel and plane crashes then they did about other women. While only one wife admitted to knowing that her husband had been unfaithful and only one admitted being suspicious of her husband, many wives expressed concern for their friends who didn’t know of their husband’s extramarital affair(s). The following responses are representative of the group.

I think it's real easy out here to worry a lot about groupies and things like that, because they're always out there. But I think if you have a stable marriage and you keep your husband happy and you stay interesting. It is just like any other marriage (G2).

It can be a worry, because you know it’s. . . . You know there are people out there who are willing to do any and every thing. And these guys are kind of like. . . . I don’t want to say different, because many are the average guy, but they are in the position when they’re so in the limelight and they are perceived to be certain
ways and a lot of guys are that way and they’ll kind of, I think influence other guys to do things they maybe normally wouldn’t do. So things do happen and you hear stories flying around. It can make you crazy, if you let it. I don’t know. I think you just have to. . . . It depends on your relationship probably with your husband (F2).

And as far as worrying about other women, I trust him and I assume he trusts me but I know it is out there. I think it’s out there a lot more than I would like to admit, but there’s also a group of guys that know that they’ll get killed and plus have no interest too. You know that it’s going to only hurt your marriage and that kind of thing. Fortunately, I think we’re kind of in that category (G1).

I think that they become more vulnerable to maybe not morally living the way that they should or would because wherever they go, there’s always girls hanging around, ready and available and my husband says you would die if you walked into some of these hotels where the guys stay. There are girls hanging out all over the place, just ready and willing and whatever, whoever, whenever, whatever just so they can sleep with a professional athlete. And someone at a weak moment would take advantage of that and that tends to cause serious strain on the relationship (F3).

Recalling a period earlier in her marriage was B4.

I think that it made me be less ambitious eventually. Initially I was very concerned with my career and where I was going and what I was doing, but as the possibility that someone else might come into the relationship and that I could lose him I think I became more preoccupied with that than with my career, so it’s definitely affected my progress.

In reference to a friend F6 stated:

I’m not saying that I’m sure, I don’t know if the temptation, if that’s the word, I don’t think the desire’s been there, is what I’m trying to say.
Like some guys who used to run the streets, I've seen it. And it hurts, it hurts when you see it happen to a friend of yours, that you see her husband carrying on with somebody else. You don't know whether to tell her. Sometimes, I think I'd want to be told and other times I don't know. I think it's almost better that you're naive like I am versus having to deal with it. You know, there are guys on our team that have girlfriends that do visit them in training camp while their wife and families are at home and that's real hard.

One wife identified and discussed the issues of denial by wives and the prevalence of extramarital activity as she observed it.

There's an ego thing there and a lot of wives don't want to discuss it. I think you deny it. That's my guess. Unless it's headline news. I mean and you've really been forced to seek help or a confidante.

Interviewer: Do you think that there are a lot of basketball players that do see other women?

Oh yeah. I know there are. I'm not saying they all do and I'm not saying that those that do, do it on a regular basis, but say they have a fight at home and they go on the road and they're disturbed and stubborn, they meet somebody. That could make the difference between whether they would go to bed or not with someone. Others have deeply rooted relationships everywhere they go. I mean it's an active complex life. And then there are some like (name) that have their mistress and they fly them around different places so that they have time with them.

Interviewer: Was that prevalent, I mean do you see that frequently?

Oh yeah. Sure. At the time it seemed like I was the only one that was aware of it. Nobody else . . . the other wives never discussed it and it looked like they didn't know. I saw it but didn't
bring it up, cause problems with somebody else's marriage, but I knew it was going on.

Interviewer: Do players try to cover up for other players?

Oh yeah. Well see that's the first rule, you don't tell. I mean it's a conspiracy. Coaches, trainers, ball players. You know, what happens within the group, stays within the group and those that tell their wives or girlfriends or whatever or are questioned, affirm, you know, that this shouldn't be going on, really get ostracized. They're in trouble (B4).

Another wife explained how the problem of "groupies" varies among different cities.

That's why I say a lot of it is a function of where you are too. Because it's so calm here, it's easy to put it all out of your mind and to pretend that it doesn't exist. And the girls aren't out there that week or at the game for that week and at the hotels, and they're not calling the room, because it doesn't happen here. After the games there may be a couple of little ones standing around, but there's not real . . . people that you would feel threatened by. Not the case in some other cities. For example, . . . if I were a wife in (city), I think I would constantly live with the fear because it's so real to me and because it is after every single game. There are like . . . because the guys have to come back out through the arena. Sometimes they don't. They just go out the back or the side or something, but if they don't, they come back through the arena. So at any given game in (city) you'll see a section full of beautiful, tall, attractive women with long hair and nails and designer clothes and BMWs, you know work for (company) and there's a section of them, 200 of them, just sitting around waiting for them to come out. And to me I find that nerve wracking because if I were a wife there it would be a constant reminder that this thing is real and that these women are serious. And they are. They're determined to break in. See, we can live in a fantasy land here, because it just
doesn't happen. But it would be different and it was different in (city). At that point we weren't married so I wasn't as worried about it. I'd hate to have to live with that every day, wondering who all these people are and who are they waiting for. It's bad enough here, every now and then when they're like a cluster. You can always tell, depends on what team we're playing. If we're playing (city) they come out of the woodwork. You're like "where did they come from?" or if we play (team), they just come out of nowhere. And there's still a little version of what happens in some other cities. I've really heard some stories. Out in (city) -- It's bad out in (city) as far as the women and they're being very bold. I remember a wife telling me once that there was a female there who gave her a scented note. Gave it to her to give to her husband. And then she opened it and it said something along the lines of "liked your moves on the court, like to check them out off the court." But we've ... I've really never had any problems like that, but I know that it happens in a lot of the bigger cities where there are more ... and when the guys are bigger celebrities and the women, they're coming. They figure "hey, a possible pot of gold." That's evidenced by the number of paternity suits that are popping up all over the place. Here it's pretty calm. I like it (B6).

Parent's Attitude Toward Husband's Occupation

When asked what their own parent's attitude was towards their husband's occupation the great majority of wives indicated that they felt their parents to be supportive. While a few wives said that their parents worried about athletic injuries, most wives indicated that their parents were "happy," thought "it was neat," were "pleased" or "loved the (husband) for who he is as a person."

Generally, with the exception of most basketball wives, a different description was given when the wives were
asked about the attitude of their husband's parents. B6 reflected:

They're more supportive I think than anything. When he gets in a slump then his mom tends to step in. She's real religious and then they kind of get on the same wavelength to get through hard times. But they don't tend to really push him and they don't really tend to pester him about money things or anything like that.

B4 observed and added:

I don't think they thought about it. I think they were so busy surviving that they never even... it was not a thing like I see mothers and fathers now that can't stop talking about "when he makes it, we're going to buy a house and we're going to do this and we're going to do that." They are really looking for that to satisfy the wants in their life.

Some golf and football wives stated that their husband's parents "don't go off the deep end" or "enjoy it but take it in stride," but most of them made opposite observations.

His family lives for his golf. (Husband) is the shining star (G8).

They're jealous of me, I took (husband) away, I get to live with him. I get to see his games. I get to live in a nice house and drive a nice car. They think whatever (husband) has they are entitled too. We've had a really hard time with his family, even (husband) has (F7).

His dad tends to be particularly critical of him. But I think it's because his dad plays and plays well. He's a very good golfer. He gets really mad at (husband) when he takes time off. He thinks (husband) should play from the beginning of January until the end of November and every single
week. It's like (husband) plays well at a
tournament. It's like "how can you take the time
to take off" you know. This isn't like your life,
you work seven days a week you know, for four
weeks in a row, we need to take a week off. And
his dad would say, "see he takes a week off and
this is the result, every single time." I mean,
that's hard and (husband) just gotten really good
about not listening to it. So now his dad says
things to me (G2).

Parental pressure was identified as a problem.

I think in a way, yeah. Not intentionally, but I
think . . . his mother's really said that his
father lived his life through (husband). And
she's always claimed that he did put pressure on
him. I think he feels a lot of pressure from
him. I think he really wants to please him you
know, a lot and he does. That's a lot of pressure
for anybody (F5).

His mom was real levelheaded. His dad is totally,
totally, totally, into their boys' lives. He
thinks if you're not an athlete and that you are
not into that, then you're nobody.

He's always said, "Gee, (wife), I'm sure your
dad's disappointed that your brother didn't go on
and make it and do something better and bigger."
(Husband's) dad brought them up -- you are the
biggest and the best, you're going to play sports
whether you like it or not, you're going to be in
every game there is. He really, really pushed
them. My doctor brought up the point, "Hey, maybe
the reason (husband) wants girls is so that he
doesn't have to face that pressure to have a son
to compete like he was pushed to compete." He has
a real hard time with his dad (F6).

Agreeing and elaborating on the problem was G5.

They want him to do well and they express it to
him, but (husband) never feels any pressure from
them at all. They're very untypical of the usual
parents of a golfer. I know a lot of golfers out
here feel a lot of pressure from their parents and
they can’t seem to get away from them and it causes a lot of problems. But we don’t have that, thank goodness. One less thing we have to deal with.

Interviewer: Is that a common problem?

It’s very common, very, very common where the father’s very domineering, and you’ve got a lot of golfers who have to call in after each day’s round and report to "dad" how it was. And dad either goes "okay" or "why didn’t you do this or do that?" (Husband’s) father, I hate walking with him, because he is very, very critical when he walks with me. "Oh, why didn’t he do that and why did he do this" and very, very negative, but when he’s with (husband) he’s very positive, which is nice. I tell my husband, "if you only had to listen to all the negative talk I hear from him when I walk with him, you would be as upset as I am." I don’t walk with him anymore. He just gets on me too much.

Off-Season

Golf wives do not experience an off-season, as such, as do the wives of professional football and basketball players. For golf wives, other than "a few weeks at home around Christmas and New Years," there is no actual off-season. When her husband does take some time off, one wife described their life-style.

At home, (husband) usually doesn’t practice, doesn’t go to the course. He’s at home playing with the kids, doing . . . he’s a house husband. I’m going to be working, trying to catch up with all the paper work. Like I said before and we kind of switch roles. When I’m out here, I take care of the kids and make sure everything runs smoothly and he goes and does his work. When we go home, he takes care of the kids and makes sure everything runs smoothly, while I’m busy doing all the paperwork and the accounting and all that (G5).
Off-season for football and basketball wives seemed to vary greatly, with no significant trend. Several wives mentioned a more relaxed style of living. F5 described it this way.

In the summertime we go back home and people pretty much leave us alone. We live up on the lake and it's probably . . . you like go there for inner peace. It's wonderful and that to me . . . is we're kind of a family and we all do things together. We all go out for pizza, we all go out for the movie, no one bothers us and so I have a little idea of what it's like not to be the wife of a pro athlete and I'd have to say I'd put it that way. I mean, I really do. I really look forward to the summers and stuff.

F5 agreed about a more low keyed life-style and also talked about an adjustment period.

It's a lot more low key and he's much more mellow. He turns into a house husband and he's around a lot more and we do a lot more. It's a stressful change, both times for me. I just, every time something's going to change I usually freak out. But when the season comes to an end, I get a little bit down, I guess, because it's exciting, no matter how mad or frustrated I get. It's exciting and all of a sudden I kind of think, now what are we going to do? We're just going to sit here in this house and I don't think it's good to be around each other a whole lot all the time at home. I guess I really feel like we should have some space. But I guess we do a lot more things. We just relax a lot more. There's not a lot of time to relax during the season and even when he's relaxing he's not relaxing cause he's gotta play. So it's not like real, you know, relaxing. They can't ever truly relax during the season, they just can't afford to do that. They can't whether they wanted to or not. They just can't. It's so physical and he gets so mellow when the season ends. He's like another person. So, we'll go out to lunch and do little things
like that I enjoy doing you know. I look forward
to that in a way.

Also identifying an adjustment period was F9.

He spends much more time with (daughter) in the
off-season than he does in-season. I have to be
more tolerant of his moods during the in-season
than the off-season. In the off-season, I can
kick his butt, during the in-season I have to be
nice to him. Because he does, he sleeps all day
Saturday and they have half a day practice and he
comes and sleeps and then he wakes up, we have
dinner, and he goes to the hotel. A lot or
everything relies on me, the burden falls on me.
Off-season we travel a little bit more, we try to
take two or three vacations every year, somewhere
warm in February and then again in March or
April. He’s home more and there’s an adjustment
period. Like in January, kind of like the
adjustment period, okay he’s in the house more,
you are not used to having him home.

F9 also mentioned:

Football for (husband) is there all year around.
He takes the month of January off and then he goes
back in and runs and does weights. It’s not the
same regimen of practice and stuff like that but
it doesn’t stop. It’s just a half a day. Those
are primary differences.

The year-round aspect of football was identified by F6
as well.

Most of the players get into some other
competitive thing, even though it’s off season,
they still have that need to compete. He does a
lot of speaking engagements, he does a lot of
charity work, and mostly they work out. It’s
almost become a 12-month job, so he continues to
work out. He takes February off, so we are
really, that’s like our vacation time. But then
he starts back three to four days a week working
out.
A few wives mentioned that their husband used the off-season for educational pursuits. For example:

It's very important for my husband to keep busy. He's one of these people that he's got to be challenging his mind all the time, which I'm very grateful for that, because a lot of sports figures just spend their money and then they don't really care about anything else. But he's very motivated as far as financial matters go. He graduated from (college) with a finance degree and so he's very much into that type of a world. So in the off-season, since our first one, he's been going back to school. He's working on his master's degree now. He's almost finished, he's got one more semester, which he'll finish after the season's over. Because during the season he can't take a full load (F1).

Only one wife identified the off-season as being more stressful for her. She commented:

Typically for me, the off-season is stressful because I'm working and he's off and that's a problem for me. And I have been trying to figure out a way that I could take some of the time off during the summer to spend with him and my daughter (B6).

Friendships/Socialization

The wives offered a variety of responses when asked who they socialized with the most. Old friends, family, other player's wives, neighbors, and the mothers of their children's friends were mentioned. Examples of the responses included:

Probably . . . during the season it ends up being probably half and half. Half with some of the wives and half with neighbors that we're really close friends with. And another friend, like I
said, that's outside of football altogether. But during this time of the year probably more of our other friends (F2).

Well, it would be the wives' Bible Study because you have a camaraderie and a trust. It's a common bond and you kind of know they're on the same wavelength and they're the ones who encourage me and they're the ones that I can open up to, ask for help or things like that. So it would be that group (G7).

Most of my friends are people that I've known from church or my daughter's best friend at school. Her mother and I are friends. It's just I keep in contact with my friends and family through the mail. Most of my day I'm home taking care of the kids. If I go out and do something I would say its more with one of my friends from church than one of the wives from the team (F7).

The overwhelming majority of wives agreed on the difficulty of making good friends. Typical responses that described this trend stated:

I socialize a lot with . . . well, I used to socialize a lot with the players' wives. A lot of them have left now. I socialize with tons of like who my kids go to school with, to nursery school with. I've made a really nice group of friends that unfortunately, we don't have couple friends with those people. (Husband's) real leery to just go out on a Friday night with another couple when he doesn't know the man. It's kind of sad, I think. He says, "I don't want to go out with some guy that's going to talk to me about how (teammate) is and what basketball is like." He's really comfortable with people who are already existing friends (B5).

It takes a long time to make really good friends on the tour and you don't make that many, just a handful, which is probably the way it would be anyway, you know, if you lived a normal life. But, it's like friends, you get to know people just so far and there's something about and I don't know if it's hard to make friends out here
because people miss cuts and you may have tentative plans for Friday night and you ended up playing bad and you didn’t want to go out to dinner. Or they miss the cut and they leave. So, that makes it hard to make solid friends, as well. . . . But it’s not like you meet people and you don’t talk. It’s just that you don’t go very deep. And then it just takes time to meet people that you really like and that you really can trust and that don’t care, they get past the money thing (G2).

Maybe it’s not nice to be that way but you just learn from so many times before. Maybe it’s not fair to be that way. But with (daughter), as children get older, they meet friends, so you become friends with their mothers. And I’ve had to be very cautious because there are so many people out there who do only want to be friends because of what you do and aren’t genuinely friends. So you tend to be cautious and be kind enough, use good judgment, and you go with that (F9).

You really find out who your friends are. You’ve got all the friends in the world when they’re playing great, but then they start talking about you when you’re not (G3).

Relating one of her experiences was F7.

I think after you have been around you can tell right off the people who come up and want to introduce themselves and be friends with you right off and start talking football things. They want to be friends with you so that if they get in with you and your husband they think they will get tickets to all the games and such. I had that happen to me at an orientation at school for my daughter. We all were sitting there and we had this slide show about the school so we would know where everything was and we went on a tour around the school. I saw this one lady just eyeing me and I knew she knew who I was and she purposely ran into me when we were in the gym and made it look like an accident so she could say, "excuse me, I’m so and so." I knew she was planning the whole thing. I could just tell. And then she started talking and I said I was (name). She
said "Oh, that is funny that I would meet you because my mother-in-law said that if I should meet you that I should introduce myself and become friends and get a tour of your house. And I told my mother-in-law that forget the house I am going straight for the tickets." And I kind of laughed like it was a joke. You can tell people who do that and what they want from you right off. I have had a lot of practice.

B3 sums it up well.

Well, we try to make friends outside of basketball and that’s hard too because for some reason this is hard for me. Because when I met (husband) I didn’t look at him like wow, he’s a professional athlete. I didn’t put him up on a pedestal, but most people that you meet, do and they don’t treat you like the guy next door. So it’s hard to establish a relationship. It’s almost like they’re putting you above them and you’re not, you know you’re not. I mean just because he plays a professional sport does not mean your husband or you are better and a lot of people I think have that attitude. And it’s real hard because you sense that with people and you sense that they want to be your friend because they think that you’re neat because your husband’s a professional athlete, you know. They want to get close to you and it’s like they want to take something from you. They don’t want to just be your friend and go out and do things. So we have met a couple of people outside of basketball that we do things with, but mostly we pretty much stick to ourselves. It’s kind of like the friends that you had before you were successful will always be your friends, but once you’ve become successful, it’s hard to make friends.

When discussing how their husband’s job affected their lives, the wives identified four other categories of occupational impact, including: coaches and management philosophy; drug usage; the press; and the issue of celebrity.
Coaches and Management Philosophy

Because golf is an individual sport, coaches and management are not a consideration for wives of golfers. However, both football and basketball wives had some specific points to make. On the subject of treatment of injuries by team personnel, several football wives and a few basketball wives spoke out.

He was injured you know, a few times, not too bad and then pretty bad one year at the end of his career, a ligament that they said he should be back in two weeks. And then his independent doctor he went to said "I would never tell anybody to expect to be even half way normal again for eight weeks." Typical, you know. I don’t think they were very . . . I mean they felt pressure too, I’m sure, but I mean if you would go to an independent doctor after you went to the team doctor, how can there be such a huge discrepancy. The team doctor said, "it’s just a little pull, you should be back in two weeks," and the other guy says "it looks like a slight tear and it’ll be at least eight weeks." So in the meantime, he’s feeling like you know, he should be back, coming back sooner and . . . (F10).

I’ve probably bugged my husband to death to get second opinions because first of all, the doctor there is making good money. A lot of those players have no business being out on the field a lot of the times. Other doctors will tell you that. There was a case just a couple of years ago where the doctor told one of the players that he did not have broken ribs.

Interviewer: A team doctor?

A team doctor. And this guy just couldn’t believe that there wasn’t something more seriously wrong and went and had another opinion and his ribs were broken. They were definitely broken. They’re getting paid good money, these doctors, and trainers as well, to say I want him on the field because we need him, do whatever it takes to get
him out there. Which is what I hate to hear because a lot of times they're playing with an injury, but the trainer will what we call "shoot 'em up" with something. It's not a steroid but it's like a pain killer or something so that they're out there playing with the injury, they just can't feel it, but then like I said when my husband's coming down from a game, it's usually because whatever that pain killer was that they maybe gave him from the injury is wearing off and you're feeling the pain and you're thinking "gee, I'm injuring it more" (F1).

The old team doctor was an old, old man. He was a friend of (owner) and basically was a quack. I mean I hate to say it, but it was true and he had no problem with (husband) playing. It didn't bother him. And the management itself you know, they'll take whatever you give them. They're never going to tell you to stop, never. So they don't . . . they have this attitude of which I was real surprised because somebody mentioned to one of the head people something to the effect of "well, (husband) risking his career to play for you guys for that year" and they looked at him and they said "well, we risked a lot too. Do you realize that we could have still had to pay his salary and he wouldn't have been playing." I mean they look at it so monetarily. I mean these guys figure what they can produce and how much they can produce and how much money they're worth and that's basically how the management looks at these players. Which I think is so wrong. I just think there's a lot more to it than that (B5).

Also expressing her views on being aware of the medical care was F4.

Know what surgeries he might be having because some are unimportant and some maybe shouldn't have happened. And you know, the medical care is very poor, very poor. They should be aware. I've learned the hard way about surgeries and medical care. I've learned the worst way you could possibly learn and what I know now. If I could . . . and I have told a lot of people, "Don't do it, don't do what they tell you. Go somewhere else."
Interviewer: Can you do that?

They get upset about it, but legally they have no way to stop you.

Interviewer: So you can go to an outside doctor and say I want another opinion?

Yes. I’m telling you, they get upset and they’ll tell you about it and they’ll refuse to financially do it and fine, do it yourself and they’ll get very upset and they still do to this day. But you know, it’s his body. It’s his future. And that’s something you shouldn’t mess around with. And like I said, I learned the hard way. He’s had a lot of surgeries that were either done poorly or possibly were not necessary. We don’t know. They’ve caused a lot of problems and in the future will cause more and I think a lot of wives are unaware of that when they should be more aware (F4).

Identifying another issue associated with injury was F9.

Management, players, coaches, it’s just there and obviously it’s all individual but a black player’s expected to play injured more quickly than a white player is, without a doubt, no doubt about it. Again, I don’t know that for every team, I just know what I know. If he’s hurt or has the flu, he has to go, more readily than a white player. Basically I think there are exceptions, but overall they think black players are stupid. Without a doubt, they think they are stupid men, stupid kids. And yes, because people come from all parts of the country and all over the place, there’s racial discrepancies and segregation a little bit. We have it fairly decently on the (team). To me it used to be worse and it’s gotten better although you would talk to some black wives who don’t think it’s that way, they think it’s bad.
A great number of both football and basketball wives stated that their husbands felt and were treated as if they were a "piece of meat," or "a commodity." Typical in this respect were the following responses.

Oh, there’s no doubt about that, they are considered a piece of meat. They’re all expendable. Even the big players like (super star) he’s expendable, we’re all expendable. And yeah, they’re a piece of meat, no doubt about it (F9).

Just because of all the head games they play with you and any time one of them gets hurt. They have to worry about if they’re ever going to get to play again. They put somebody in their position and this guy does better and they’ve had it. It’s just unbelievable.

Interviewer: Is it coaches or management or both that play the head games?

Both, but I think the coaches mainly and I think they’re getting it from management. It’s not the way people think it is. It’s not just glorious. Maybe for some of the guys it is, but it’s a tough game and you never can think of, "gosh, I’m good. I’ll play a lot of years." It’s a constant fight for your job, constant. Every week even. No matter how good of a game you had, they’re going to pick you to pieces and show you what you did wrong and if they’re losing, god, they just treat them like dogs practically. Yelling at them, it’s not like, "oh gosh, you’re this great football player, everybody thinks you’re so great." It’s not that way in practice. It’s never . . . you never just get to sit there and think, "wow!" It’s a constant fight. It’s tough, it’s tough, I don’t know how they do it (F5).

Oh yeah, you’re a commodity. Everybody realizes that it’s become a business and that these things happen. They want someone on the coaching staff or someone in the front office when they get traded to at least call them and say, "I’m sorry, we’re going to miss you or show some sort of compassion." People get traded and they hear about it from the media. Nobody ever even calls
them before they announce the thing and so that tends to make you feel like nobody cares (B4).

That's just how he felt, he was just a piece of meat to them, you know and he's just a cog in the wheel of a big organization and even if the coaches care for you which you know, a lot of them are kind of two faced anyway, but even if they do, there's nothing that they can really do. I mean, they're as much at the mercy of the whole system and everything as anybody else. It is a business you know, you won't believe it, but it's a business and in fact it's more of a business than a lot of businesses. They really... he used to say "we're a family" and that got to be so ridiculous after a while, even he didn't believe it. It's not a family and I think that a lot of the players go through high school and college and they are kind of a family, they are a team, they're all there because they love it. And you know and then they expect it to be this way and it is supposed to be that way when you play and you are supposed to have this, you know, and you do have some of the same comraderie and everything but it's not a family, it's a business and you're an economic decision to them (F10).

But it never... you'd think after being around basketball for 12 years you'd be smarter, but it didn't occur to us that they would cut him for no reason other than the owner just didn't want him, so they cut him and it is like three weeks before Christmas. They cut him, we've got these two houses and it just was like, you know. I mean the TV stations, they came to our house, they interviewed him in the living room like this is really a rotten deal (husband), "how do you like this." And it was, it was rotten what they did and he didn't deserve it and it was hard for him (B2).

Football is so demanding... and this is a true story. A friend of ours just had a baby during football, a player, an important player, important. And the coach said something to the effect of well, you know, "congratulations but couldn't you have handled it differently?" (In other words don't have your children during football season.) And that's really... that's what they expect. Complete and total devotion to
the career, at the expense of anything else in your life. And then people sort of wonder why players have a hard time after football, why they have a difficult time readjusting. Well, for however . . . even if their career's only 3-1/2 years they've had to focus exclusively on playing. There's no opportunities to develop anything else. It's a year-round job and it's totally demanding psychologically. You can't get something else going (P11).

B8 sums it up well.

I could sense it taxed him. One time I saw just all the veins here just protrude, the stress from doing that, from being manipulated, from being bought and sold. Even though it's good money, you're still bought and sold. I think all that ate at him and then enthusiasm was drained and it was a business.

The majority of basketball and football wives expressed the negative regard or treatment that they received from coaches or management. Exemplifying this trend of responses were:

But they really look at us like this. I remember there was one time when they'd won a championship and they had this great big dinner and of course everyone has to go up and give their little speech. And so the general manager got up there and said, "I just want to thank the players, of course, and the coaches (and named all the coaches) and I want to thank all the office personnel and we want to thank (secretary) for typing all the letters and we want to thank" . . . you know they were going through the secretaries name by name and they thanked . . . I mean you name it and they thanked them. The wives were never mentioned. Okay, he sat down and the next guy got up and then the coach got up and then one of the head players got up and every single one thanked the exact same people. Well by about the fourth or fifth person that got up there, I was starting to get really mad and it wasn't because
I’m . . . I’m not a women’s libber. That’s the last thing in the world I am. I just don’t think that we’re given any credit whatsoever. I mean if they’re going to thank the secretary for typing a stupid letter, thank me for making his pre-game meals. Give me a break. And finally somebody like the guy said "okay, that’s it everybody" and somebody like tugged his shoulder and kind of whispered something in his ear and he stood up and he goes, "oh yeah, and I guess we forgot to thank the wives, the girlfriends, the boyfriends, the cats, the dogs and all those people" and then he left. I said I’m in the same category as the cats and the dogs. But that’s exactly how they think of us. It really is . . . I think the organization . . . they have come so far as to tell us that we weren’t allowed to go . . . years ago we weren’t allowed on like an airplane, the same airplane with the guys. I mean if we rode on the same airplane as them it was just horrible and yet . . . in fact the general manager had the gall to look at (another player’s wife) one time and say to her. She said to him "well why can’t we go to the playoffs" and he said "the reason that they have the rules is basically because if another guy on the team was fooling around, somebody’s wife might find out about it and tell his wife." I mean in so many words it’s basically what he said and she said "you mean you won’t let me go because you’re protecting somebody’s girlfriend?" They had a rule that wives weren’t allowed to sleep in the hotel room with their husband but a girlfriend could be in there. A girlfriend could sneak in, but a wife wasn’t allowed to travel with their husband. I mean is that the most ridiculous thing you’ve ever heard in your life. I said I sleep with him every single day, I mean why can’t I sleep with him in a hotel room. It doesn’t make any sense (B9).

They don’t care about the wives at all, but they don’t want the wives to cause trouble. I don’t know how all the teams are, but (team) don’t like wives. They could care less about the wives because basically the management people think that wives are a problem, they get in the way, they’re a problem, they are very trite. They don’t want to be bothered with the wives (F9).

Because there’s a thing in the NFL where everybody knows what happens to everybody. There’s all this
networking. You can get black balled, you can get talked about . . . because I’ve seen this happen with a guy who was on the team a long time and his wife called the papers and said a bunch of things and he tried to go to another team and no one would even take him and he could still play. You have to remain polite, and I do it only for my husband because otherwise I wouldn’t keep quiet (F4).

The owner of the team, he’s a male chauvinist or whatever. He’s definitely that. He doesn’t care too much about women period. He’s just into that. His team and money is the most powerful thing to him in his life and I guess to me he just . . . the wives are just here because during the end of last season we felt left out and a lot of times you really feel left out by the owner. He gets things and it’s for the men only and we feel that we are the backbone to our husbands and he makes us feel that we’re not about anything (B9).

Adding to their thoughts on the subject of the treatment of wives:

In my estimation if you would keep those wives a little happier, their husbands might be performing a little better. It’s a vicious circle (B4).

What they don’t realize is that there’s no one that wants these guys to play better than their wives. I mean there’s not one person in that management that wants those guys to win more than we do. We’re the ultimate supporters (B5).

Drug Usage

Drug usage among husbands was not brought up by golf wives as being an issue or problem in their lives. Basketball wives indicated that steroids were not a problem but recreational drug usage appeared to vary among teams. As one wife indicated:
It’s very impressive, the guys that I know, that I’ve been around and from what (husband) told me, they don’t drink, they don’t do drugs. I mean the (team) have a very clean team. I’ve been at parties with them and they drink soda, they don’t even drink. There may be a few, like maybe one on the team that really would ever drink and that’s maybe occasionally or something. The ones that I know are very clean (B3).

By contrast another wife described the drug usage, by both the husbands and their wives, of a team on which her husband played.

When we were in (area of the country), I don’t think it was . . . I was never exposed to it there. In (city), it was a casual thing. Like going out and having a soda or something. I can’t believe how casual they were about it and I think you take the atmosphere in (city), it’s laid back, very laid back. I used to think . . . every time we’d fly in I would think, that’s not snow on those mountains. I think those people go up there and get that stuff. I thought that stuff grew on those mountains, the way they did that (B8).

B1 compared basketball to any other area of life.

I think it’s like any other area of life. I think drugs are a problem in the NBA and in the world in general. I don’t think it’s uniquely a problem to the NBA. No more so than any other sport. Perhaps because they have more money the drug dealers pursue them more so, but I really don’t think it’s more of a problem than anywhere else. Other than the fact that they are highly visible and it could create a negative role model for children.
A few of the basketball wives did indicate a concern about prescription drugs being so readily available to their husbands. For example:

General usage and over usage. Both prescription and nonprescription. Particularly prescription. We’ve got drawers full of them. He doesn’t even take them, but he just like . . . If he ever took all the things they have given him, he’d be an addict probably right now. But he doesn’t, we don’t. I don’t either. He’s got so many pain pills and so many anti-inflammatories. I mean just pills for flu and pills for whatever. That’s one of the things that they do, is to give them pills. Thank God he doesn’t take all of them (B6).

The majority of football wives expressed great concern about the use of drugs by players. While cocaine was a worry among some wives, steroid abuse, and the attitude of coaches and management about steroid use, caused much anxiety. F10 relates:

I mean here’s a guy who we all knew had a cocaine problem for years. He had to have tested positive on every drug test and yet until it was convenient for them, you know when he has this contract dispute with them, you don’t hear a word about it. And then all of a sudden it’s like "Oh, (player) by the way, you tested positive." That type of . . .

Interviewer: What you’re saying is . . .

They cared about him when he decided he wanted more money and then they cared about him. If they would have cared about him as a person, they would have sat him down and said "(player), you’ve got a problem. We can’t tell you how to run your life, but we’re going to bench you and pay you until you get this straightened out, and we’ve seen this problem and here’s the examples of it." Everybody knew. And steroids, that’s another good example.
They have closed their eyes. Steroid abuse is rampant and they have closed their eyes to it because it's been beneficial to them.

Interviewer: Is that coaches and owners alike?

It's everybody, coaches and owners and trainers and if you really cared about the people that worked for you, you would not let them take steroids. These guys don't even know what they're doing. They get it from some quack at a gym, a musclehead somewhere. And so yeah, if there's a big enough stink about it, they may be forced . . . and I feel the same way about the Players Association. They haven't taken a stand against it, because their members want to be able to use it, so they won't come out against it because half the guys don't think they could play if they weren't on steroids. So, who's going to take a stand for the players and it's . . . you don't have the self confidence . . . and steroids do increase your . . . so probably you're going to get cut because some guy that's as good as you or maybe even not quite as good as you, intrinsically, takes steroids. You probably are going to get cut and not many people have the self esteem to say "alright, well, I will lose my shot at the NFL and I won't take steroids and I'll leave the game." How many people could do that? So I really . . . I don't mean to sound bitter, but I feel like they're very hypocritical in the way that they, it's just immoral almost. These guys are going to have liver cancer in 15 to 20 years and be dying off and they're going to say "oh, well we didn't know that they were taking steroids."

In agreement was F1.

It's there. Nobody can deny that. They've put it on the press and everywhere else. I'm lucky, my husband doesn't touch that stuff and I don't think he ever would just because he takes too much pride in the body that he's taken so long to get what it is, but it's there and I think the reason why it's there is simply because "well, he's doing it and in order for me to look good against this guy, I've gotta do it, my career's on the line" and it's sad in the fact that it's just a vicious,
vicious circle and it’s because everybody else does it that makes the guys think that they have to take something before the game. Or they have to take steroids or be on steroids or, I don’t know, whatever kind of drugs they’re doing. I’ve seen guys that have retired from football, I’m surprised they have a mind left, because they’ve played for 13 and 14 years and played on drugs. My husband knows them, they were like friends of his or whatever and he talks to them now and he says it’s like talking to a ... it’s almost like they’re not all there anymore and it’s sad because football’s not a life-long career and I think the guys forget that.

Interviewer: What is management or the coach’s reaction to the drug use or steroids?

That’s a good question, I really don’t know. But then again, on the other hand, I know that they’ll do anything ... the coaches and the management, to get that team on the field to win. Whatever it takes to get that guy playing to his potential, the best that he can be. It’s sad to even say it or to think it, but I think if they think a guy’s on steroids or maybe even now that he’s on steroids or doing something, I don’t think they even want to see it. I think they kind of just "well, what I don’t see, I can’t report and I don’t know about and he’s playing good" they can like sweep it under the rug, which is bad for the guys because the guys need to wake up to the fact that you’re hurting yourself and it’s the management that could do that, that could be the one to step in and take that action, but they don’t. I even tend to think sometimes maybe it’s the trainers or maybe even some of the coaching staff that maybe help these guys get what they want. I don’t have proof of that and I probably have no business saying that, but that’s just from the outside looking in. It’s hard to believe that that many people could be doing something without nobody taking notice and not doing anything about it.

Reporting a similar opinion about the attitude of coaches and management:
But I would say the majority probably don’t care. If players want to take steroids, let them take them. Probably some of them even distribute them. We’ve heard that. Now just this week, or last week, we read about (player) for the (team) he had this substance abuse problem, and (coach) was ridiculed because he supposedly knew about it. And he knew, there’s no doubt that he knew about it. He can say in the paper that he didn’t know about it, but he does, because they know everything. They know everything. They just do, they make it their business to know everything. That’s why they don’t like some of the wives because they know what they’re like, they know what they do, because they just know things. It’s not the F.B.I. but it is close. They just know, they make it their business to know. They don’t want troublesome players. But when there’s a troublesome player like (name) they will put up with it. They shouldn’t. The rules are different for him than other people. They shouldn’t put up with it, but they do. He (coach) knew, they know who they see this guy with. If they want to find out what a person’s doing, they can find out what he’s doing. They know who’s in that house at night and they know who’s in that bar or whatever (F9).

The dialogue with F4 was in agreement with other football wives.

It’s incredible and it’s incredible what it does to them. They are animals on the field. Their strength is incredible. About 4 or 5 years ago (husband) was like the third strongest guy on the team. I mean he was considered very strong and over the past three years he’s probably dropped to number 10 or 12 of his strength and how much he can lift and these guys are bench pressing 600 pounds. These guys are animals and the tell tale signs are their veins are popping out, they have knots in their chests. Knots coming out. They have mild cases of acne, depending on whether they take the pills or whether they shoot it up. Most of the (team) shoot it up.
Interviewer: What about the wives of these players?

I don’t think they know.

Continuing:

Interviewer: The coaches are aware that they do it?

Yes.

Interviewer: And they just choose to look the other direction?

Yes. It wouldn’t surprise me if the coaches supplied. I don’t know that, but it wouldn’t surprise. Not necessarily the head coach, but the position coaches. They want to win at all costs.

Commenting on how she perceived the attitude of the owner of the team on which her husband played, F4 added:

They don’t care about the player as a person or what kind of physical condition he’ll be in. They might start caring a little more now because there’s been some lawsuits, but as far as that goes, most of the owners were against drug testing. Because they have to pay the rehab, they have to pay for the counselling, the facility. It’s just one more added thing. They lose players, it costs them money.

The Press

Other than one complimentary remark, almost every wife expressed either caution, fear, frustration, or anger at the press. One wife related how she "pulled into a shell and cried for a month" (G11) after her husband was ridiculed in an article. Several wives mentioned feeling helpless because often words are twisted around or taken
out of context and they have very little recourse. Typical of the comments are:

You would like to see your husband highly regarded by the press, which is just a joke because the press has no idea what they’re writing about (F11).

They can turn anything and make it negative so I think in society or the world as a whole you’re bombarded constantly with negativism. Even for something positive there is a negative way to state it (G7).

I think that the press can be a very very good thing. They can be very good at promoting good and positive things. They’ve been wonderful in helping us with our charities. We wouldn’t have been able to raise $100,000 had we not had so much publicity for it. But I think too that they can be absolutely relentless. They’re there to sell papers and they’re going to do it the best way they can, whatever it takes (F3).

And I know one wife that has like ulcers and it has to be in dealing with a husband that’s under so much pressure in the media and being criticized and things like that. There’s no way to separate it (B4).

But first of all, I have learned that not everything that is in there is the truth. Some of the things are true, but somehow they make up stories because they don’t have a story for the day (F9).

Either on the record or off the record. I don’t say anything about how I feel anymore. You have to be careful and a lot of time (husband’s) misquoted. They chop up sentences and put them together and it might not be what he said at all. I’m real leery of the press now (G11).

Issue of Celebrity

Being a celebrity, most wives agreed, does have some advantages. Fast service in restaurants, better car deals,
and no waiting in lines were all mentioned as perks for families of professional athletes. However, the pattern of responses from the wives indicated that, while most felt being "bugged" somewhat by the public goes with the job, often their privacy is infringed upon. G5 puts it this way.

It’s nice when it’s at a tournament and people see him and they come up and ask for his autograph. I just kind of stand back and watch and I say "yeah, this is neat," but it’s hard when you try to have private time with your family and someone comes up to you and wants an autograph. It’s like an intrusion but you kind of smile and you’re nice and okay, that’s enough.

In agreement were B4 and F4.

No. People don’t leave you alone. If it’s a problem that you’ve got to discuss, whatever, you can’t. I mean, just when you might be at a crucial point in a conversation somebody comes and slaps a pencil and a piece of paper in front of you "could we have an autograph?" and you’re thinking "oh, great" (B4).

It doesn’t bother me at all. It’s like . . . he’s not a Joe Montana either, so I can imagine it’s depending on the degree of how famous you are, it would be worse and sometimes I do look at (husband) and say to myself, why don’t people just leave him alone. The press doesn’t leave them alone. And I think to myself. I would never do that, I don’t care who it is. I would never go up to their table while they’re eating and say something. I just never would do that. And so when people do it, it’s sometimes amazing to me. It’s most amazing to (husband) and it’s the strangest thing when a 50-year old man walks up to you and bothers you when you’re eating. You can understand if it’s a child, but when it’s a man who has a family and a career and a life, he just thinks it’s weird (F4).
F5 described what it was like for her.

I think I thought what most people think, that celebrities just have these charmed lives and that being in the limelight is wonderful and being . . . having people recognize you and ask you for your autograph and want to talk to you is wonderful. I used to think that was just neat and I would love to be one of these people that everybody knows and it’s not like that at all. It’s exhausting and leaves you no privacy and you know it’s annoying at times, even though people say, "oh gee, you poor thing, everybody likes you." But it’s not like that because they don’t like you, they like you as far as (husband) concerned, they like Number ( ) on the field, playing football. They don’t know a single thing about (husband) as human being, the way he is. They could care less about that. They just like you as a tough football player on the field making tackles and that’s it. They don’t really know the rest of you or could care less, really.

In reference to their lack of privacy:

When (husband) and I first got married we decided that no matter how . . . I mean this sounds stupid because it’s not really something that you think about, but no matter how famous you get or how many people bug us, we’re never going to let this bother us. We’re going to still go out, we’re still going to be the same people, we’re going to still go to movies whenever we feel like it. We’re not going to let it hinder us and we really tried to do that and as the years have gone on, it just hasn’t worked out that way. I mean so many times I’ll say to him, "oh, honey let’s go to the mall and buy some Christmas stuff for the kids or whatever," and he’ll say, "(wife), I don’t want to get bugged, the last place in the world I want to go is to the mall." I think we get the brunt of it. I really do because I find myself having to do a lot more of that kind of stuff. That’s what most husbands and wives can enjoy together. I end up doing it myself and I can’t really blame him. In fact he looks at me and he says "you know, I wouldn’t mind it so much, but it really gets you mad when people come up and ask for autographs." And I realize that our time together to me is so
small and so precious and to have these kids so close and stuff, you know we really haven’t had a lot of time for each other, that when we really do get out, whether it’s dinner, which is so seldom or it’s just for a pizza or to a movie or something, I really want him all to myself. I really do and I know that people don’t understand that, but I really like him a lot and I really want to spend time with him. Do you know what I mean? And it’s kind of become that we . . . our house is kind of a little sanctuary and this is where we have privacy at home that we just don’t have anymore and it’s hard (B5).

Another wife described being in the limelight and how she handled it.

It’s sad but this world looks at success and says you are somebody if you win, you are nobody if you don’t. It was almost like I didn’t even appreciate the talk they gave last night at the dinner we were at. I couldn’t believe how many times I heard this guy say, "You have arrived, you have now won a PGA tournament." He said you have arrived like three or four times. I almost threw up, nobody has arrived here, nobody has mastered golf. Nobody has arrived, nobody is as good as they say they are. And I’m a firm believer of that, I don’t, people always say, "How did you feel? Weren’t you the best?" (Husband’s) going, "why are you hyping me up like this?" It was a great win, I’m so happy I won, but I am not number one in golf, I’m not." It’s amazing how so disillusioned people get over golf. You can tell I’m starting to get excited about this. There’s too many people that say, "Oh, you were right." It was great to get that victory under your belt, but that is not the most important thing in the world. If it is we might as well commit suicide because we are not going to win this week. I mean, and so when that attention is being put on you, you start to get bitter almost, because people are just crazy. And you’ve worked hard for this win, and you’ve made it and you’re happy. We were ecstatic on the win. I was so thrilled, I was out of control. But what more do people want?
Interviewer: How did you see your behavior change? You said it took you about a month to kind of get back together?

It took me a month to trust people, and to deal with people with discernment. People would be so excited to talk to me and it didn’t dawn on me that it was because (husband) had won or because he had become all of a sudden a great golfer. Also these thoughts came to me, "hey, just a minute, if (husband) hadn’t have won, we would have never gotten any of this." And so, it took a lot of work in my own spiritual life, not to be bitter towards people. You have to work on that daily, daily. I know why people come up and talk to (husband) "Hey are you (husband), hi, I just want to meet you." So spiritually I’ve had to work on that, asking the Lord to give me a spirit of graciousness and not to get trampled on but to be kind. Does that make sense? And so, I think what happened was I got trampled on a little bit, in a winner’s way of getting trampled, a victor’s way of being trampled. And then I got bitter because of that I realized that I heard congratulations so many times that I was so sick of it and then everything kind of died down and nobody cared about that win anymore and they cared about next week. Who’s going to win next week. The rest is history. So he’s the defending champion, who cares, who’s going to win the world series? Just a matter of time took care of it, but I want to deal with it differently. I didn’t deal with it very good. We had attention real quick and I wasn’t ready for it. In fact, I told (husband) "I don’t want you to win again yet, I can’t handle it." I simply can’t handle it, that’s how I felt. I just didn’t feel like I could handle it. Of course, I feel like it now, it’s time you can win again (G9).

Summary

In summarizing the occupational impact of professional sport on marriage it was found that, although most wives said they knew about the sport, they didn’t have much
knowledge about the life-style. When discussing what it is like to be the wife of a professional athlete, and what they have enjoyed the most about their life-style, three patterns of response emerged. First, a significant number of football and basketball wives stated that money or financial freedom ranks number one with them. Second, the majority of golf wives found travel opportunities to be the most positive aspect. Finally, the off-season was perceived as a great advantage, predominantly by basketball wives and a few football wives. Tensions and frustrations associated with the job included feeling used by the public, husband’s job insecurity for the football wives, and problems associated with travel and separations for wives of golfers. Football wives also identified a great concern for threat of injury.

Loneliness was not a problem for most wives but availability of other women was considered an issue. Most wives felt that they didn’t have to worry about their husbands being unfaithful, but most agreed that "groupies" are a problem.

A great majority of wives indicated that their parents were supportive of their husband’s occupation, but golf and football wives identified parental pressure from their husband’s parents as a problem. Golf wives do not experience an off-season, as such, and the off-season for football and basketball wives seemed to vary greatly, with
no significant trend. The wives from all three sports indicated the difficulty in identifying and making good friends.

On the subject of coaches and management philosophy, football and basketball wives expressed concern over the treatment of their husband’s injuries and over the fact that they were treated as a "piece of meat" or a "commodity." The majority of football and basketball wives also expressed resentment about the negative regard or treatment they received from coaches and/or management.

Golf wives indicated that drug usage was not a problem in their lives. Recreational drug usage appeared to vary among basketball teams, with some basketball wives expressing concern about overuse of prescription drugs. Some football wives worried about cocaine but their greater concern dealt with steroid abuse and the attitude of coaches and management about the problem.

Almost every wife expressed either caution, fear, frustration or anger at the press. And while being a celebrity, most wives agreed, does have some advantages, often their privacy is infringed upon.

Role Concept

Primary Role

On the issue of what they considered to be their primary role, the majority of wives mentioned either the
mother/wife or wife/mother function as being dominant in their lives. Bl is a good example.

I would have to say at this point that I feel that my role as a mother is more important than my role as a wife because (husband) is what he’s going to be and like I said before, there’s not too much molding the rock that he is. I could chip away at it a little bit, but if I took the majority of my time to try to change and mold him, I’d be fighting a losing battle. Whereas I have these two little pieces of play dough that really do need to be shaped. So for that reason, I think that my role as a mother is more important. It’s interesting to have this conversation because these things are probably in me that I don’t think about. I just never thought about whether my role as a mother is more important than my role as a wife now. I do say that I do keep in mind that it is important to make (husband) feel like my role as a wife is no less important because some husbands probably can get jealous and I don’t think (husband) really would but I don’t give him that opportunity.

One wife, whose husband had retired, described her mother/wife role in this manner.

But my major role . . . a teacher. Kind of like to instruct my son to take his wings and fly and find his way in life. But my husband, he can’t find his way right now. So both of them, I’m kind of like "okay guys, this is how you fly, watch mom, mom is going to do it." I feel like that’s probably it. I’m helping them get their independence again and all of this is new for (husband). It’s a totally new independence he’s got to find (B8).
Two patterns emerged when the wives discussed their roles of wives and mothers. The first was support, expressed in terms of accommodation. This trend was noted by a few football wives but especially by wives of golfers.

I pay all the bills, I do all the paperwork, all the investment research. I talk to the financial people. I buy all the furniture, I’ve done all the wall papering and painting. I sew and cook and bake. I take the kids to school and since I’m home more during the day I do the bathing and the diapering and all that stuff. But I just kind of . . . during football season I just tried to make sure that there was nothing that he had to pay attention to besides football and that was his job, my job was to do everything else.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that role?

I like it because I’m a very controlling person. I like to know what’s where and to be doing it and I don’t want to be the one . . . I like to keep on top of things. It was never . . . it was really my choice. If I hadn’t done it, I’m sure he would have done it. But I’m a nurturing person. Controlling and nurturing (F11).

Golf wives stated:

My primary role? A servant and that way it covers serving others and that includes first and foremost my husband and (daughter) and then serving . . . when people need help (G7).

To make (husband’s) life out here as easy as possible. To make sure his shirts are done and you know, unpack his suitcase, pack them. I help him out and you know, make sure . . . just to make life really easy on him and it’s really important for him to see me out there walking and I watch him play, he likes to have me watch. He always knows there’s somebody out there that loves him in the galley, you know, and watching and just basically to make his life easier (G3).
I'm (husband's) biggest fan and helping him get everything done so he can concentrate on his golf and helping him achieve his mental goals, because I can't really do anything about his mechanical goals. And just helping him stay organized and giving him something else to think about besides golf. Encouraging that part of him, as well (G2).

The second pattern of support was expressed in terms of "cheerleading." This trend was mentioned by a few football and basketball wives, but particularly by golf wives.

I'd say right now my primary role is probably mother. Mother and holding the family together, kind of. Trying to make everybody happy at a time, when you know it's tough... pacifying (husband) the days when he's losing, to be kind of his cheerleader and when the kids are down and get them up and to make them understand that this is what daddy has to do and whatever else (B5).

Well, you know when I say he depends on me, for himself, just himself. When I think about his family, he solely depends on me to raise his family and do for them. But for himself, I would say basically, he depends on me as a cheerleader. I pump him up when he needs it, he does depend on me for that (G4).

I think though that I have to be real supportive. I'm not saying that I'm selfish by any means. I have to be supportive of what he's doing and he needs somebody to say "yeah, you're doing good" or "keep going" or whatever (G6).

My primary role, I believe, is with God. That is my primary role, to be a godly woman and I need to be careful here. My primary role is I'm a wife. I'm wife and I'm a cheerleader and I think my role is very important out here supporting him. He was very lonely before he got married. He wasn't very happy eating by himself and sleeping by himself, so I feel I play an important role being his companion and supporting him in what he's doing and together we want to represent Christ (G9).
Most wives felt comfortable with what they considered to be their primary role. F1 summed it up well for the group.

There are days where I sit here and think to myself "this is not fulfilling" and then other days it's the most fulfilling thing I could think of that I want to do and certainly those days far outweigh the days that I would want to put on a suit everyday and go to work. But there are those days where I feel that my mind is going unchallenged and, because I was in school and working for so long, to come right out of that life-style and then to go right into a housewife role was something that was really hard for me to do. I still have problems sometimes with it, where I will get very irritable in the fact that I see him going to school and I see him learning and doing and things and I think "well, when is it my turn?" because I would love to go back and get my masters and stuff too. But right now it's just not feasible and I believe very strongly in being home with her until she's in school. He supports that very strongly, if that's what I choose to do. He also wants me home with the kids, but he certainly would not say "no, you're not going to work, you're going to stay home with the kids." He's not that way (F1).

Behavior Codes

Almost every wife stated that there were behavior codes that she considered or followed. The responses by the great majority of wives indicated a pattern of concern about their image, which then affected their behavior. This "image" was described in terms of personal appearance, being a reflection on their husbands, and on being a role model.

But I was real worried about a behavior code when I first came out here. I was looking at all the
wives and wondering what they were wearing, wondering what they did, just how they acted, and a lot of it I didn’t like. A lot of wives, I know, are tough and fight it out. They are almost in tears after their first luncheon because everybody was wearing silk dresses and they wore cute little golf outfits. That’s what they thought would be proper. If you are looking for a high-class society, you can find it on a tour, there’s no doubt (G9).

I just thought it was important to present the image that would not embarrass (husband) in any way, just to always try and look nice, be nice to everybody and it was nice to go out places and be recognized (B2).

But sometimes that pressure is not only from inside but from outside too. How people think you’re supposed to look. I feel that sometimes more than I do from inside because I feel those people, it doesn’t really bother me and if they get to know you pretty well they know either you don’t care or whatever, however you chose to feel. The weirdest thing, I told a girlfriend of mine when I first came here is that if people get to know you, you feel like you have to put on clothes to go to the grocery store. I go to the grocery store and it’s terrible, without any makeup on my face or whatever. You feel really funny (F2).

Just act like a lady and use your manners. Don’t dress really funny or weird and I don’t know. I don’t think you need to bring too much attention to yourself. I think that we get enough as it is and I think that if you’ve got any set of smarts I think you know how to act out here, it’s just a matter of using your brain and that’s it. Just act like a lady (G3).

Commenting on being a reflection on their husbands or the organization were three basketball wives.

Yeah. Especially in public because people will know who you are and you don’t even realize they know who you are. I was in a Burger King with my son once and . . . . This has nothing to do with me, but there was a couple at the table next to us
talking about another player’s wife and they were
saying I saw her at the hospital, she was visiting
a friend and she looked like a bum! First of all,
I know this woman and she couldn’t have looked too
much like a bum. She’s a very attractive lady and
secondly, who’s to say that basketball players’
wives can’t look like a bum that day? We really
are just like anybody else. I just had to say
that to emphasize my point that you have to be
more careful about what you do in public because
you are a direct reflection of your husband (B1).

Well, like at the games, you have to dress up.
You know, sometimes you might not feel like
dressing up but you are representing him. Going
to the grocery store, I’m the type of person I try
to act, I try to blend in. I don’t really want
everyone to know who I am so I won’t have that
problem. A lot of my friends . . . some of the
wives that I am friends with, if we go shopping
they will make it known in the store who they are
and that type of thing, but I don’t do that (B7).

I do. I don’t know that all of them do. I feel
. . . because I’m pretty social conscious and I
feel uncomfortable, because I feel though whatever
it is that I do reflects on (husband) and what
(husband) does affects me too. That I have an
obligation to carry myself in a way that won’t be
embarrassing to me or won’t be embarrassing to him
or the organization because we reflect an
organization, so there are a lot of things that I
won’t say in public or I won’t wear in public or I
won’t do in public. Because in a lot of ways you
are a role model and even if you’re not in a
position at that time of being a role model,
people are very aware of everything that you do.
You have to be real conscious about that. Because
otherwise it will be in the newspaper or something
strange. It will (B6).

G2 concurred about being a role model.

Yes, I do, I really do, because you are a role
model and like I don’t feel like I can . . . if
(husband) hits a bad shot, I don’t think I can act
up on the golfing sidelines and it sometimes can
be really difficult because people come up and
want to talk to you, but you don’t really want to
talk and you have to be nice. Because if I’m not
nice then the first thing they’re going to think
is "oh, that (husband) he’s just a real snob," you
know. Because especially up where he’s from, I’m
like the spokesperson. They can’t get to
(husband) because he is so busy that week. So if
they talk to me, they feel like they’ve talked to
him and they’ve been with (husband) vicariously.
And so, I have to be nice. Not that I . . . but
there are times when he’s playing bad and I’m in a
bad mood and the last thing I want to do is just
chit chat with somebody that I don’t even know,
you know. I think that you’re a definite role
model. . . . So, you really do have to watch what
you do. It’s important because to somebody he may
be hero and I am a reflection of (husband’s)
personality.

A couple of wives no longer worry about their
appearance.

I used to, but in the last five years I said
fine. I figured if people don’t like me the way
that I look and don’t give me allowances, then
that’s their problem (B4).

The days where I hand somebody a check and it has
our two names on it and they’ll say, "oh is this
the (husband)?" If I look good that day I might
say, "yeah." If I don’t have any makeup on and my
hair is up in a ponytail like this, I’d probably
say, "oh no, there’s no relation." I usually just
say yes and I don’t care what they think of me
anymore. I’ve kind of gotten past that where I really
care if somebody . . . what somebody thinks of me. I think I went through that when I was
younger and had more time to really focus on me
and now I don’t have that much time and I think I
don’t really care if they don’t really think I’m
good enough for him, that’s their problem. You
know, we’re happy (B5).

Several wives made reference to the press, of being
fearful of the media and how they watch their behavior.

Since you are in the public eye I think you always
try to put on a half decent face. I don’t do too
good at faking things. My emotions pretty much show, so I have had to work pretty hard, like if I get really upset about how (husband's) playing, there have been times that maybe I didn't conceal it enough and people knew that I was really upset and I knew I shouldn't be, that type of thing. I think there is an unwritten code that... about your behavior and you have to handle the media tactfully, because there have been times you can innocently be giving a story and 99 out of 100 times just a slight switch in a couple of words may turn your whole message another way and you can really offend some other players and their families or something so innocently. So you have to really handle the press very carefully or not at all (G7).

I mean there are certain codes that we follow as far as behavior in public. Sometimes, like I said before, for instance like if a group will get in our way, if I wasn't a professional type wife or something like that, it would be easier to tell them where to go and get off at. But I know that I have to handle myself in a way because the media is always looking for stuff like that. An outburst. So you have to just sort of control yourself. And as far as the everyday thing, going out to the grocery store, I always try to look nice, but there have been times when I just get up and make sure my hair is brushed back and I don't worry about makeup because sometimes some places you go, no one knows you anyway and I try to avoid a lot of television if I can, so that I won't be known like that. I don't want to be known like that. I just want to be an everyday normal person and I want people to accept me as I am and not because I'm married to a professional athlete (B9).

F4 relates her frustration in not being able to speak out.

When I'm home, no. Absolutely not. Nothing. I don't follow anything but the way I feel. When I'm around other football people there are things that I want to say all the time, and I fantasize about saying and I can't say. And I hold it back for one person and one person only, and that is my husband because he would have a heart attack.
Otherwise, I would say it because I don’t care about protecting myself. So, yes. There are behavior codes. His philosophy and what he tries to preach to me is to keep your mouth shut, smile, do what you’re told and when you get home, then you can be yourself. And that’s how I’ve made it all these years in the NFL. When I’m around people that are not football people, I say more, but I still don’t say or behave maybe exactly how I would want to because peoples’ misconceptions of what’s going on is so incredible that it drives me crazy.

Important Qualities for Wife

A variety of qualities were identified as being important to have if married to a professional athlete. Being mentally tough, developing a sense of humor, patience and being friendly and outgoing were all mentioned. G3 is an example.

I think you have to be able to mix well with people, mix very well with people, get along with everybody, this is your life out here. I think you need to be friendly and make an effort to get along and when you’re at parties you need to be very outgoing and you know, you’re your husband’s other half and he’s got to have a great other half and people judge you as a couple. Your husband may have the greatest reputation in the world and then he’s got this wife and she’s a flake, that brings down his reputation. Also, you have to be very giving and very understanding and very patient and learn to wait, because that’s your whole life. It took me a long time to learn how to wait. I wasn’t very patient at first, but you know, you learn. There’s nothing you can do about it, so kick back and relax.

However two definite patterns emerged. While mentioned by a couple of football and basketball wives, being
supportive was the quality stated as being most important by the majority of the wives of golfers.

You have to have a spirit of encouragement about you, knowing that golf isn't everything, but knowing that your husband's good, helping him along. When he looks across the ropes at you walking along down the fairway and you're dragging your feet and you know it. Discouragement can only hurt, it can't ever help. So you have to have the spirit of encouragement about you (G9).

I think you have to be a good listener, you have to be a good support person, I think you have to be there when they need you and just basically, really a good listener and be able to . . . when they tell you something, be able to express back to them what they're trying to tell you so you kind of understand exactly what they're saying and be a real good sounding board (G5).

Obviously, supportive. You have to be able to be a support role, a supportive role for your husband (G8).

F1 agreed about the importance of being supportive.

I've said it before. Very supportive. I think, and my husband's told me this. The minute that I get down about anything, I tend to bring him down so in our particular relationship with him playing football, I have to try to be up all the time. If nothing else for him and that gets frustrating because there are some days, especially now that I'm pregnant, where you just don't have an "up" day every day. So that gets kind of hard, but I would say just to be very supportive, very loving. Probably more giving of your time than maybe you want to give sometimes. Listen to them. If they want to talk about the game or if they don't want to talk about the game or what they did or what they didn't, just to be there.
Football and basketball wives identified having or developing a strong self-esteem as the most important quality for a wife.

I think it would be very helpful to have a lot of self esteem. I think if you can be really happy with who you are. Because it's something that I think I've really had to work on and I think that's been one of the toughest things for me. If you can be really happy with who you are, you won't feel quite as threatened by what else is out there (B5).

As the thing you need to be an athlete's wife? High self esteem, sense of humor, because if you took it seriously, it would really kill you when you left, you know when it was all gone (F10).

To be themselves. I've seen women who become who their husbands are. They take on that "I'm a Superstar too." Spare me. Just spare me (B8).

I think you have to be very, very secure with yourself first. I think you have to know who you are and what you want, if you don't then you're going to be lost. I also think that you can't get caught up in what they're doing and I've been guilty of it. I want (husband) out there playing because I want him out there playing. Sometimes I think I got too involved. That's why I think it was such a jolt after five years of doing what we wanted to do to have (daughter). I couldn't pick up and go anymore and do all these things with him. It really has been a blessing in disguise because it's helped me (F6).

In agreement was G2.

Patience. Patience and you've got to have a lot of self esteem for your own self because it's so easy to feel like you're brain dead.
When discussing the importance of good self-esteem, several wives talked about how difficult it was to develop your own sense of self when married to someone with a high athletic profile.

I think my biggest problem was my identity. You know, I was always told being raised, that God gives everyone a talent. When someone else's talent is so much larger than what you think yours is, you wonder about it. God, give me a hint, you know, where did you hide this talent? But a lot of times, and I mean this was actually physical, I could be standing there and people actually walked over me, stepped on my feet to get to him and I'd go . . . I would pinch myself, "Am I standing here, God?" I just found it hard that people could put other people on such a pedestal. Especially a human that I live with. How can they think of him this way? Dribbling a ball up and down a floor? That took me a long time to . . . and I probably still really don't understand why people do that. I guess if someone excels so much in a certain area, I can see the attention. A guy that can take a heart out and put a new heart in, okay. But, even he's out in the stands you know, watching (B8).

Talking about their feelings of wanting to be recognized for themselves were B6 and G8.

A lot of time I get perceived as (husband's) wife above and beyond everything else. No matter that I'm working at the hospital, doing great things at the hospital, got a lot of respect of all my colleagues there, and doing all kinds of wonderful things. To people in general, I'm still (husband's) wife above and beyond everything else. And sometimes I have problems with that. I like to have my own identity and I don't want to be necessarily perceived as his wife. Not that I have any problems with being his wife, it's just that I also am my individual self, independent of him. I think a lot of wives, that's their identification. That is their identification. Like some of them haven't gone to college or they
haven’t gotten their degree and they feel pretty insecure about that and that is what they use to elevate themselves (B6).

There are wives who attach themselves to their husband’s esteem and some men want that, some women want that and some people get by in life that way. For me, and it was great to be (husbands) wife. I was proud of him, I was proud of his accomplishments, I was proud of him when financially or successfully, I didn’t have any reason to be proud of him, except that he was my husband. But by the same token, I wanted so badly for people to see me for me, because I wanted to carry my own weight. I mean I think I can get by on my own out here. So I think that was a struggle (G8).

F11 explained her thoughts and observations on the topic of self-esteem.

The hardest . . . the one thing though I’d like to stress is as a wife, it’s very difficult to develop your own sense of self esteem because you are perpetuating, nurturing someone who is probably very moody in that respect because football is so demanding. It’s like you’re giving to your husband and they’re just taking from him everything that you give him. So you kind of go I think . . . what about me, where do I fit in, where do my needs fit in. And really I think most wives have very little time or energy to attend to that because they’re forced to support their husband’s ego needs or physical needs. I mean if your husband’s got chronically sprained ankles and you have to be a human crutch for him and do everything for him, you don’t have a whole lot of time to take care of yourself and that’s, I think, something that’s neglected. I think most wives end up getting kind of the short shift. And then when football’s over the husband’s needy in another dimension, kind of like "What am I going to do with my life"? and he’s having his own crisis. These women are just really not equipped to take care of that because they don’t have the fortitude or they don’t have the resources. They haven’t had an opportunity to develop them. They’ve just been giving for years, which is part
of the job description, and they haven't been able to develop themselves. I think that's why there's a crisis. I think the longer you play though the more you realize that you have to be strong yourself, or you're not going to be able to help yourself. I think the players who are there a longer time tend to do better. The wives do better because they have had to have realized that it is strictly business and you better get your act together or you're going to be high and dry when that phone call comes. Time to turn in their old play book. The young ones, I think, look at the glamorous side and just sort of forget that you better develop something to fall back on or you really will feel like you're being drained. I don't know, I guess that's from observation.

How Husband's Job Has Changed Wife

Almost every wife felt that she had changed as a result of her husband's occupation. A few wives felt either spoiled, more dependent on their husbands, or less motivated than they were prior to marriage. Examples included:

I think it spoiled me, it's probably spoiled me more than it should have (F10).

I think that it's definitely made me more dependent on him because I haven't applied myself as well at work and at getting better jobs and learning more and staying in school and doing stuff like that (B4).

It's changed me. I'm not career oriented. Right now if my life changed drastically, maybe I would start thinking about a career again, but I just . . . you know when you first come out here I think . . . you know there's just got to be something I can do to like make money or to like work somehow. There probably is but there's a lot of other things that keep you occupied and you don't have enough motivation . . . you kind of lose your motivation (G1).
Several wives stated that they were more independent or more self-assured. Comments common among these wives were:

It's probably made me a little bit more aggressive. It's probably made me a little bit more street smart (B1).

So it's changed me in that respect that I think I've grown up, I'm not as naive. I don't take a lot of people's word for anything anymore. It's discouraging to have to say that but you look a lot deeper now to know if somebody's being sincere with you or whether they just want tickets or whether ... (F1).

G5 mentioned her new independence.

Changed me? I'm probably a little bit more outspoken than I used to be. I used to be pretty shy, not say too much, not disagree too much. Now I pretty much disagree, if I feel like disagreeing. I'm probably a lot braver than I was as far as traveling and doing things by myself. I used to hate doing things by myself and now I'm more independent probably. I know I can do things by myself now. I can go out and if I get lost, I get lost. I tell my daughter all the time "we're going out on a little adventure, mommy doesn't know where she's going, but we're going to try to find out where it is and we're going" and she says "okay." So I think it's basically I'm more independent.

Discussing new self-assurance was B8.

I think it only brought out hidden talents that I could do. I never thought I could organize a fashion show. And then when I was asked, it brought out the things I didn't know I could do and that was wonderful. I think the very first experience was the owner of the (team) ... we were at dinner one night and he said "(Wife), what do you think of so and so and so and so?" I looked at (husband) and then the owner said "I'm not talking to your husband, I'm talking to you"? And I said "you're talking to me, oh my God,
somebody wants to know what I think." And (husband) kicked me under the table because he thought oh no, what are you doing. And from that moment on, when someone wanted to know what I thought, well, I gave my answer to whatever it was. And he said, "that's wonderful." I thought oh God, I love this.

A few wives mentioned that they were more relaxed about money and their buying habits now, but one wife described her feelings of money and responsibility.

But it has changed me in a lot of ways and it's made me really aware of you know, like the financial part of it. It kind of changed me I guess because it's like no matter if you have a little money or a lot of money. However much you have it takes more responsibility and I guess it made me really wake up a little bit and realize the responsibility I have. And I just think I've grown up a lot. I've had to. I moved away from mom and dad and my brothers and sisters and my friends and I've had to really grow up because I was dependent on those people and now I just have to be more independent. I don't think I used to be a loner but since I've been married it's really changed. I mean people don't just look at you as the guy on the street any more or whatever and that's part of why I'm a loner now. I've really done a big turnaround actually. I think I'm reaching that happy medium now. You can't be that way. You have to realize that it's no big deal. I think I've made a big deal out of it and I think what I'm realizing now is that that's their problem. It shouldn't affect me (B3).

Husband's Ego

Two patterns of response emerged when the wives were asked about their husband's ego. Football and basketball wives, while frequently indicating that it wasn't a problem for them personally, stated that many husbands who are
professional athletes do have big egos. Indicating this belief by their responses were:

Oh, definitely. There are a lot of enormous egos. I mean if you read you were wonderful and everyone . . . especially the superstars, that their whole lives, they’ve always been the best, you’ve always been the best, even in junior high. They were praised, they were rewarded, they were taken care of. If something happens, even if they did something wrong, it was taken care of. I suppose that in professional football, everything has been taken care of. If they make a mistake it’s not a mistake if they do it, it’s a misunderstanding and it’s masked over, it’s taken care of. And they read all this stuff about how wonderful they are. They’re almost demi-gods in a sense and they . . . I think it’s difficult for them to accept failure within themselves. If they do something wrong, and it’s in the press it is very, very difficult. You rise so far and then all of a sudden you drop. There are a lot of very tender egos, who get preferential treatment by everybody. And when they get called on the carpet for something and it’s not taken care of, I think it’s a difficult situation for them, a lot of them (F3).

But speaking generally I think that because the way athletics are in America in particular . . . I almost don’t see how you can come out of it without having a big ego. There are just so many people there to talk your ego up. There are so many children around that think these people are God. And it amazes me because I know that they’re just regular people that have extraordinary jobs and they do them very well. But there are so many people around to puff up their egos, it’s almost impossible not to have them. Especially if you’re a player of any stature (B1).

I think a lot of them have huge egos. I mean they don’t show up for speaking engagements or they promise they’ll be somewhere and they don’t show up because they’re that big that they can get away with it and I just . . . I could never understand it. I see how it could happen though, I really could and if it would have been different circumstances for (husband) it probably could have happened to him, too (F10).
B9 puts it this way.

Definitely. They definitely have . . . some of them do have big egos, but then you have to think of . . . some are worse than others. A lot of them basically come from the low income type family or, I guess, the ghetto area or whatever and with athletes they’re all paid a substantial amount of money and to get that type of money for the very first time. It goes to their head and the first thing they do is buy the big time cars and stuff like that and as far as . . . believe me when I say this, guys that wouldn’t get as many female associates without being in the professional athletic life, get more, and it’s a big ego thing to do that. Just to have a woman from here to there, from city to city, whenever it might be. Oh yeah, their egos are definitely big.

The trend of responses from golf wives indicated that many golfers do have big egos. But, because golf can be a humbling game, egos are fragile. The descriptions by G6 and G7 fit this trend.

Yeah, yeah, I do. A lot of them and I think my husband had a pretty big ego, especially coming out of (college) because he had done really well and I think that maybe that was part of the trouble. He had done so well that a lot of people sort of expected him to do really well and he’s his own worst enemy. He puts a lot of pressure on himself and you didn’t see it right away and that was real frustrating for him. His ego’s not as big since then . . . It is fragile. Like last year it just shot him right down. He had no confidence and he’s real fragile. I would say that he doesn’t have a big ego now, but he’s extremely fragile (G6).

I think it’s easy to have a big ego, but I think they’re fragile. I think the guys don’t let themselves do that because they know the sport well enough to know that you can shoot 63 one day and 83 the next. It’s that volatile. There’s just too much room. So you can’t get yourself
high and mighty. There has to be that self confidence and that "I know I can play this game" but you can't have it to the point where I'm better and bigger than anybody else out here and I'm going to win this tournament because I'm the best player. You know you can't do that because you set yourself up and you certainly can't let the media know those thoughts because they plaster it all over the entire media. Realistically, you have to . . . you know they need stories and they'll take anything to make a story (G7).

Most wives felt that their husband's ego had not affected their own identity. And a few mentioned how they dealt with their husband's ego.

I always tell him, it is kind of our joke, he might be first string on the football field, but when he comes in the door, he is on the fourth string. Because the kids come first and that's it! (F7)

Making that adjustment to me wasn't a big deal because I never let myself float up there. You know the ego trip that they're on. Some people put them on high pedestals. I was always down here saying "alright (husband) you should come down pretty soon, don't you think? Hey (husband) they're gone, come down." So I don't think I was ever up there. It wasn't like I had to come off of some ego trip. I think women who are up there with them, who think they're above people, that they are some super human being or something, they have a problem (B8).

One wife, who was resentful because she was often ignored when her husband was receiving a lot of attention, handled her situation in this manner.

I explained to him that I didn't appreciate these people doing this and that I knew that there were some things that he could do to help the situation. Number one, the first thing he could
do would be to introduce me. And his comeback was always, "I can never remember these peoples’ names" and I said "well in that case you can always remember my name. ‘I want to introduce you to my wife’ and then that way, they will offer their name and their hand and then that way there’s a bridge." That was the major issue at one point in our marriage. It was probably not uncommon (B4).

Values

Each of the participants was asked to rank their values, and the overwhelming majority of wives stated that family came first with them. Several wives mentioned God and church as most important, with family immediately after. Only a couple of wives mentioned health or love and trust as being their most important value. Typical of those who ranked family first were:

First thing is my family and I guess health goes along with that. I think church is important. I think that we need to believe that somebody else is watching out for us (F6).

Oh, family is way above any of them and there’s so much of a difference between what’s number one and number two that I don’t even know that I can say what number two is. The rest of them just kind of fall into one big category. Of course, financial security is one of them, but that all ties into family and being able to keep family together and family happy. And health. I’d have to say health is number two. Family, health, financial security. Religion is in there somewhere, but it’s not as important to our family as it is to some others (B1).

The most important is my relationship with my husband, my relationship with my children, a good family relationship, our relationship with our extended families, I think. And then church. The church is very, very important to me (F3).
Well, my children are most important to me. That’s one and my husband is the next. I guess I should say my husband because he provides for us, but I know that my children are mine. And I mean with my husband and I guess that’s with anybody’s husband, they may be yours today and someone else’s tomorrow. That’s the way my values are (B9).

G5 and B3 are good examples of those that mentioned God first.

Well, the most important thing is God. He comes before (husband) and anything else. If you’re right with God, then you’re going to be right with people and fair with people and fair with your kids and everything. And of course after that, family. I think family is very important (B3).

Well, God is number one, my husband is number two and my family is number three and somewhere along there, being a good person. Being nice to everyone. I think that’s real important. I think it’s real important to be nice to everyone (G5).

Competition Among Wives

An additional topic that surfaced during the discussions about role concept was that of competition among the player’s wives. All but one wife noted the existence of some rivalry. Examples of this rivalry ranged from "just keeping up with the Joneses" (G9) to the story of two players’ wives who got into a fist fight over salaries (B1). Competition and jealousy over material possessions was frequently mentioned by several football wives.
I’ve never seen more jealousy among a group of women than I’ve seen being a professional athletes’ wife. I mean, you know, it was just gossip city. Other wives were concerned of what other players and their families had. Who had the most or what type of house they lived in, what kind of car they drove, who’s got the biggest diamond ring, who’s got the fur coat on at the game. Things like that (F8).

But that’s the thing about it if you’re going to be hanging around with all the other players’ wives. Boy, it’s an expensive life-style. It really is, the clothes and the jewelry. Because there is a lot of gaudy stuff amongst the wives. Jewelry, cars (F5).

It is usually when the wives association meets. Unfortunately it has never been just purely pleasurable type events. It’s usually to plan something in particular and then there’s arguing and bickering and clamoring for power and kinds of things that I think if you were thrown into that right away you’d be like "Oh, God, what have I gotten myself into?" (F2)

Concurring was B4.

I hate to say that, I hate to think that, but I have a feeling that this is not unusual because I have talked with my girlfriends who are on other teams and it just seems like it’s a differently disguised problem, but the same problem. Different characters and different situations, but it’s basically . . . the main problem seems to still be competition and jealousy and not really having a whole lot of maturity. Just skills, communications skills. Insecurity. Probably that’s the bottom line. I mean there’s competition, there’s this and that. There’s mostly women trying to present some sort of image that they would like to be but they don’t feel it’s like they are inside.

A few wives suggested that the rivalry or jealousy stems from the competition among the husbands.
There's competition amongst all the wives and part of it again is a function of the fact that there's so much competition among the husbands, but so much of it is just pressure competition. Although I think in a way, it's all related. There's always the question of who has the best clothes, who has the best hair style, who has the best education, who's the queen so to speak, which is driving me crazy. Who cares? There are jealousies about who people ask to do things, community things, speaking engagements. It's always "Why did they ask you versus me" and all that kind of stuff and there's always the competition among . . . I mean the unspoken who makes the most money, so therefore who has the most talent. Who has the best seats (B5).

Yeah, I would say that there is. They would not admit it, no one would admit it, but there is. There are certain ones who are not all caught up in that. But there's a certain, and I feel from being here for several years, that the team, the group, because it's such a turnover kind of job, you've got rookies coming in, people being cut, people being traded, people retiring, there's new faces every year. So there's new groups every year, this group of wives and that group of wives and whatever. They wouldn't admit it, but even on offense and on the defense, there's like competition (F9).

I think it's an extremely artificial environment out there, a lot of superficiality and it's very hard to find real people out there. Real friends who don't get caught up in the competitive spirit and don't take that competitive spirit off the golf course and into personal and family lives. It can be overwhelming (G8).

Wives of golfers also described materialistic competition on the tour.

The first things you have to get when you get on tour are a Rolex watch, carat diamond earrings and a Gucci. A lot of people are into that. I'm not personally, I'd never want a Rolex watch, I think that they're ugly. I don't want a man's watch on
my wrist. I want a pretty feminine little watch and I would love to have carat diamond earrings but it's not like I'm going to die if I don't get any. And I almost don't want them because everybody else has them. You know, I don't want to be like everybody else. I want to be me (G2).

I see it. A lot of times you can see it as sort of like "keeping up with Joneses." You can really get materialistic. It's not really the true, down to earth world out there, because there's a lot of money in that respect, you see. I don't know that I'd call it competition now. I hate to say it's that strong, more subtle than competition. But yeah, you see it. It's not the down to earth type. I think maybe there's one reason why I like to step away from it because I like to be down to earth and do that and be around that, because there's a lot of things are unreal out there (G6).

If you want to be competitive, yes. I chose ... I don't need the Gucci bag, the Gucci purse. I will never forget it as long as I live. It was this thing that when you had your baby, you got a Rolex watch from husband. This person came up to me and said well, are you going to get your Rolex when the baby is born? I was so offended by the audacity of this that I said, "you know the baby is my present." I couldn't have afforded to keep up the tuning on the Rolex (G8).

Continuing on:

It's a matter of what you want. You can play the game, play the role and be as pretentious or unpretentious as you want to be, but isn't that life anyway? But yes, I think there is an extreme superficiality out there. There are nice people out there. I mean there are plenty of nice people who had their values intact and there are plenty of good Christians out there who practice their beliefs and are very nice people. But let's face it, if you're playing in this wonderful resort it's hard not to kind of get caught up in this.
Parenting

When discussing how their husband's occupation affects their role as a parent, three patterns emerged. First, both golf and basketball wives felt that their husband's travel made it necessary for them to assume more responsibility in their parenting role. One wife, whose husband has retired, described her situation.

I felt like I was the parent. I was the one at the Parent and Teacher conferences, I was the one that was at the school when something went wrong. He was on the road and when he retired, all of a sudden he became more vocal and my son's like "where did you come from? Where have you been for 15 years? and now all of a sudden you're going to tell me I can't do this." So that was another big adjustment because when he retired he became . . . he wanted to put more of his opinion on how things were done and all the other times it was like "honey, I can't worry about that right now, I just can't worry about that. Can you take care of it?" But all of a sudden this voice said "do it." . . . "Who are you? Who do you think you are? You've been on the road for 15 years and now you want to tell us what to do? We don't do it that way. Back off" (B8).

G10 described the difficulty when trying to be both mom and dad.

It takes its toll I guess because you feel like you have to be mother and father, but you can't be. In the early years when (daughter) was in grade school and involved in dancing and they would have their programs or (son) would have a soccer or a football game, we would always pull out the tournament schedule and look to see how many soccer games does dad get to see? Maybe one. Maybe. And your first thought is to make excuses and you learn quickly that that's not the answer. The children have to understand, as best they can at their particular age, what their dad is doing and it's his way of
earning a living for us and if given the choice he would chose to be there with them. But his job is away from home and he has to work. I guess the biggest step we made in relationships was when we decided unlimited phone calls because (husband) would call and talk to each of the kids and I might not even know it. He would call (daughter) early in the morning. He would call her at six because he'd know she'd be up getting ready for school and for (son) he would call after a soccer game to get the blow by blow. That helped a lot, but it still doesn't take the place of him being there. But I did learn that I can't be both. I can't be mom and dad.

Adding her comments was B2.

I'm the one that's here all the time. I'm not saying that what he says doesn't go, but face it, when they're gone for a week, ten days at a time, it doesn't help . . . I heard many a time "I want my daddy" and you're like well, "yeah, so do I. Do you think I like being here by myself with you guys." It isn't any fun for me either. They miss him.

A second pattern indicated that a few golf and several football wives were concerned about their children becoming spoiled or receiving extra privileges.

I'm so scared of the kids getting so spoiled that they can't appreciate things. They've got everything they could want really, we try to tone the grandparents down at Christmas you know, our Christmas is smaller than what other kids get because they get all year long and that's my main worry I think, is raising the kids so they're not hateful little children. That they're nice appreciative kids (G11).

It isn't like any job, especially since (husband) is so visible. I think it makes it a little bit harder to teach the kids what is right and what is wrong and what is important in life. A lot of people, well just people in general, if they have money or something, they have to buy their kids whatever they want to keep them happy. We were
never taught that way so they had nice things but if they don’t take care of them, they get them taken away. They have to earn things, they don’t just go to the store and get toys and get something. They have got to earn it. It just makes it a little bit harder to teach them the important values of life. You don’t just get things handed to you, you have to work for things and take care of things once you get them. I think people are always nice to them wherever they go or people give them things because they are (husband’s kids). And so it is hard to let them know this isn’t how everybody is (F7).

I don’t want my children to think that because their dad plays professional football that they get any extra privileges, that they’re any different. So I’m very conscientious of how they’re treated in school. I don’t want negative or positive. For him to be treated any better or any worse because of what his dad does. If his dad was a plumber he wouldn’t be treated better or worse because his dad was a plumber and I try to down play it and tried to get a teacher who really doesn’t know much about football, who really can care, that was an asset. I want him to be graded on his own personal merit, not what his father does and I think that that’s important too. It is more important to me that my children have the self esteem, their own personal self esteem, not a synthetic self esteem that’s given to them by people who are looking for something (F3).

The third trend suggested that a few football and several golf wives were concerned about the effects of the fathers being in the limelight.

I think that you need to be a little bit stronger with them because they’re in the limelight and your children need to behave and to cover it. You know, we try to discipline her now. She’s starting to learn "no" and she is going to learn her manners and she’s going to behave. Of course, they don’t always behave but she’s going to behave on the whole. She’s in the limelight. I’m not going to raise a brat and I’m not going to bring my child to the nursery and have her beat up other kids (G3).
It's like being a single parent, us, I think it's difficult for the children in that their father is in the limelight. I feel sorry for them. I mean, at the same time people expect a lot. One little boy said to my son "you're the richest boy in the school" and (son) turned to me and asked me what it meant and I said "I'm not sure, let's ask him." And so we asked the little boy and he said "well, you're father's on TV and he make lots of money. He makes more money in one tournament than my father makes in a year." I talked to the little boy about what is rich and how much money is rich and told him to talk to his parents. In golf every person that meets my sons say "are you a golfer, are you gonna play golf like your daddy"? And I'm sure that's true of every profession, but there's something about that limelight in golf (G4).

F9 explains her situation.

Like little kids, I take her to the nursery where I work out, "Oh, that's (husband's child). I'm like, No, this is (daughter's name)." We're glad our kids will be young while he's playing. Some people have older children, and we're glad that our kids won't have to go through that as much, because it gets tougher a lot, especially in this area, especially if they're a black athlete's child. There are very few little black people around here. In this particular neighborhood, the surrounding neighborhood, they're singled out in school because they are (player's) child, and then they're black which makes them different from the rest of the kids in school, and it's hard. They want them to be something that maybe they are not. They are not their father.

G11 adds:

I think I'm sort of glad that (son) is starting school because I want him to be more in a real world. I can't explain it to you if you haven't been out there, but it's sort of like almost a dream world.
In addition, several remarks, indicated that, for some wives, their husband’s occupation influenced the timing of their pregnancy.

Well I know I always wanted to be a mother and it is very planned. Deliberately at the end of his career and at a certain time of the year and it was very planned for me (F4).

We chose to wait until football was almost over because he wanted to be actively involved in the rearing of his children and he knew that if we had children during football that really wouldn’t be possible, because six months out of the year they’re gone. I mean they may be there, but mentally they’re not even there. Football is so demanding (F11).

One wife who is expecting her first child stated:

I think that children sense, even at a very young age when the father’s out of the home and I think that that affects children. I think that children need their fathers just as much as their mother and that worries my because . . . and (husband) and I have even talked about it. If it does affect the baby or if it does affect me it’s going to affect the baby then. We did talk about him quitting because I’ve seen what it does to other families. It’s really hard on the kids you know (B3).

G9 looked to the future.

I want my kids to grow up like I did. I would be afraid of the stress that it would put on a marriage, when you are at home and your husband is traveling, I think that’s real difficult. So I want to be sure and real ready to have kids when we do. I just want to really gel our relationship first and really get to know each other and love each other and learn together before we have another big responsibility.
Perceptions of Children

It appeared that small children of professional golfers, football and basketball players are not too affected by their father's occupation. R5 explains.

They realize what he does, but they don't understand why in the world anyone would want his autograph." They'll say "why does that guy want daddy's autograph and I'll say "you got me, I wouldn't want it" and they just kind of laugh but they're kind of intrigued about the whole thing. That's all they know and that's good that that's all they know. In fact, I've looked at (husband) and said we've got to get out of this before they realize that you're supposedly somebody special because I don't want them thinking . . .

As children enter school their father's profession takes on more significance.

I don't know. To them it's just his job. They perceive it however we do. We say "hey that's daddy's job that's what he does. So and so does this. Football is daddy's job, it is just on T.V. that's why you see him more." I think our kids take on the same attitude as we do. It is like that's dad, they see him on T.V. Oh dad, you are silly. Look at you. But they are not the type of kids to say who their dad is. It's not a big thing. Our kids, they are like (daughter) was so nervous to start kindergarten because she has had so much attention, people saying things to her about who your dad is. And the school is aware of it, but nobody has said anything to her. She met this girlfriend and they became best friends, she came home one day and said mommy guess what, "my friend doesn't know who (dad) is." She was so excited, said the girl she had picked to be friends with didn't even know who her dad was. She was thrilled to death. Because she doesn't like people to know (F7).

It doesn't affect her as, I guess, an everyday person, towards our family or our close friends or whatever. But the only thing sometimes I guess
being in school and kids knowing that her father is a professional athlete. You know there are always questions about it and I guess after a big game or a big night for him, she goes to school and it sort of distracts her from her work that day. But it was worse in the beginning, but we’ve gotten it straight with her that her school work comes first. And she would come home and want different autographs for different kids and we’ve gotten to the point where she knows that she has to wait until after the season is over and right at the last day of school he’s willing to go to the school and sign all the autographs that she wants. But basically keep it school work and keep his life here at home or whatever and so we don’t want her to compare the two together, put them together. We just want her to keep them separate for that school term (B9).

The wives of golfers indicated that as their children grew older, they felt the absence of their fathers from home.

You know he told me about a month ago that he wished his dad played tennis for a living instead of golf because he would be home more (G8).

They do talk about why can’t my daddy be home, why can’t my daddy go to soccer games, why can’t my daddy be at cub scout meetings. Why do you have to be the cub scout organizer, Daddy’s supposed to . . . ., that kind of thing. And the older they get, the more of that I get (G4).

There was a time when (daughter) was 10 or 11, maybe 12, she said I wish daddy didn’t play golf. I wish we were poor, I want daddy home. It kills you. That’s why we’ve worked so hard to take the kids with us every time we can. For (husband) to come home as often as he can. I mean even for a night (G10).
Summary

In summarizing role concept it was found that most wives considered either the mother/wife or wife/mother function to be their primary role. Two patterns emerged when wives discussed their roles of wives and mothers. Support expressed in terms of accommodation and support expressed in terms of "cheerleading" were mentioned. These patterns were prevalent, especially among golf wives.

Almost every wife stated that there were behavior codes that she considered or followed. A concern about their image, which was described in terms of personal appearance, as a reflection on their husbands or as a role model, affected their behavior. Several wives made reference to the press, of being fearful of the media and, therefore, of watching their behavior.

Several personal qualities were identified as being important to have if married to a professional athlete. The majority of golf wives stated that being supportive was the most important, while football and basketball wives identified having or developing a strong self-esteem as the most important quality for a wife. Several wives noted the difficulty of developing your own sense of self when married to someone with a high athletic profile.

Almost every wife felt that she had changed as a result of her husband’s occupation. Several wives stated that they were more independent, more self-assured, or more
"street smart." A few wives mentioned having more relaxed buying habits, more dependence on their husbands, less motivation than they had prior to marriage, or being more spoiled.

The wives from all three sports stated that professional athletes do have big egos, with a golfer’s ego identified as being fragile. Most wives felt that their husband’s ego had not affected their own identity.

When ranking their values, the overwhelming majority of wives stated that family came first with them. God, church and health were also identified as being very important.

Competition among wives, often in the form of jealousy over material possessions, was found to be prevalent. It was suggested that the rivalry or jealousy could be the result of the competition among the husbands.

Three patterns emerged when the wives discussed how their husband’s occupation affects their role as a parent. First, because their husbands travel frequently, golf and basketball wives felt it necessary to assume more responsibility in their parenting roles. Second, several football, and a few golf wives, were concerned about their children receiving extra privileges or becoming spoiled. And finally, the effects of the fathers being in the limelight were of concern to football and golf wives.

It appeared that small children were not too affected by their father’s occupation as a professional athlete.
However, as children enter school, their father's profession takes on more significance. The wives of golfers indicated that, as their children grew older, they felt the absence of their fathers from home.

Retirement

Plans and Concerns of Retirement

Several patterns of response developed when the wives discussed plans and concerns of athletic retirement. First, most golf wives, because of the option of the Senior Tour, don’t anticipate full retirement from golf.

Well, our plans for the future are just . . . , he’s building golf courses right now. He’s a golf course architect and basically, well, he’ll never stop playing the tour but he’ll slow down considerably and one day he might stop, but I don’t know . . . he will just build golf courses, that’s what he’s going into. He’ll never retire. I don’t think pro golfers ever retire. Well, the good ones don’t. But he will slow down you know, when the children are in school. You know we plan on having more kids, spacing them apart and that right now is basically our plan for the future (G3).

I can’t imagine (husband) being home ever longer than four weeks. I think it would drive me crazy, without somewhere to go. Without the autographs. I really do. I think once it’s there, it’s very hard to give it up. I really do and I hope for (husband) that he can play on through the Senior’s Tour until he can’t walk. But I know wives that have not felt that way and I think those years from 45 to 50, really you just don’t see many golfers making a living. I dread those years, I really dread them, and I shouldn’t (G10).
I can’t think of any other life. I have pictured myself as being on the Seniors Tour and I mean (husband’s) only 32. What would we do? It’s a scary thought. I would think that we would be okay. It would be totally different. He couldn’t work behind a desk. He’d have to be outside somewhere. We talk about it. He said he couldn’t stand a 9 to 5 job, it would drive him crazy. He loves doing something that he loves. You know, it’s not even work, doing something he loves. I don’t know what he would do. I don’t know if we would just live off of our investments or what. That would be sort of a frivolous life there too. I know a lot of young people here that do it in this area. Every cut you make you get a certain amount taken out. I don’t really understand it, but every cut you make goes to the retirement (G11).

G8 explained why golfers don’t retire.

Well (husband) always said you know that if you could do well before his mid-30s that he could quit the tour. Now let’s think about that. It’s an animal, you’re not going to stop at the closest success and you’re going to keep on and on and on. Success may not peak out until what, 38 or 40? And I told him, I said you know, I can appreciate that in theory but what happens when you’re 36 and have all the money in the world and we’re strangers to each other, and that is essentially what happened. Yeah, I think you can peak out, but why would you want to peak out when you eat, live and breathe this game day after day after day? I don’t think you’re going to walk away from it after you’ve made "X" amount of dollars. The people are there when there’s a senior tour with the lure of money . . . .

Second, most of the wives whose husbands have already retired stated that, even though they thought they were prepared, retirement came faster than anticipated and was rarely voluntary.

Physically, it’s very demanding. You know no one retires from football voluntarily. They retire
because they get injured or because they get tired and can’t compete anymore (F11).

It’s such a weird thing for a professional athlete because it comes so quickly (B4).

I guess it’s just, I mean, no matter how much you think you’re prepared and we really thought we were prepared, you just can’t almost prepare for it because all those years and then it’s over, not because you’ve done anything differently, really or it’s just over and all of a sudden there you are and there’s an article about how you’re gone and they did a nice tribute to him saying, not . . . one of the sports writers, I mean it was very nice. I mean compared to some guys, it’s like they’re gone and you never hear about them. But that was it. You know, the next day they were talking about the new free safety and that was it. And it’s just weird, because it’s so, you’re so kind of put up there high and it’s over and it’s like "what, this is it?" (F10).

Agreeing was B8.

Through the course it was planned financially, everything was planned, but the retirement itself was not planned. That date was not supposed to happen for at least four years and it happened four years early. So you can plan, I think, financially but not for the date. You never know what’s going to happen and I just told him all the time, I said just any day now what God gave you he can take it away, so don’t think this is going to last a long time. I think that they forget that it’s short.

Third, most football and basketball wives felt that while they may have to curtail some of their spending, their financial futures were secure. However, many other players and wives don’t enjoy a financial cushion. F11 and F7 explain.

We never have been caught up in the money or the glamour. You know, I drive a beat up old station
wagon. We did get a new car this year but it’s the first new car we’ve ever had. You know after ten years of football I think we’re entitled to it. A lot of the guys get new cars, giving their wives new cars and you’re talking like Jaguares, Peugeots and all that stuff and we’ve just been always very conscientious, put money in the bank for a rainy day. A lot of the players really don’t have anything else in their lives besides football, especially if they’re not well educated and when that’s gone it’s over and their wives haven’t really been able to develop anything either because their job has been so demanding (F11).

He likes football and he came into it with the idea that I want to work hard to make the kind of money that once I got out of it, I didn’t have to find a job. He wasn’t at the point where okay now this money’s stopped, I have got to support my family. I have to find a job. He came into it with the attitude that I am going to make as much money as I can and when I am through I am going to have enough money to live on and not work if I don’t want to. When you get into football you are pretty young, baseball players can play a lot longer. So, if you are out of football and if he wants to take it easy for a few years, we set it up with our accountant and everything. We have money to live on the rest of our lives, if we want to. We saved everything so that we could just pay for the house when he got out of football and not have mortgage payments. We have the house, we own it, we have money for our kids’ education, things like that. I think it’s important for people to do that because you never know how long it’s going to last. You can make a lot of money. If you can make money and save it and put it away then it is going to help. There’s people who spend everything and then you hear, they made a lot of money. I don’t feel sorry for them, they are poor, they don’t have any money. And I think too, a lot of that is the agent’s fault because these guys are young coming out of college. They have never had a lot of money. When we got married, I didn’t know anything about mortgage or house payments. You don’t know anything other than keeping your checkbook in college. You haven’t had a house, you don’t know how to do those things, you don’t know about it. And I think a lot of the agents that’s the big thing. They do the contract and then it’s like, see you later.
And then where do these guys turn to be taught how to spend your money and what to do with it because a lot of people just don’t know. You could get hurt tomorrow and it is just all over. So I think that the big thing is finding someone who is going to help you. Finding people who you trust. Our accountants and our attorneys do risk-free investments and do things that are going to help us in the future. To us, that was important, and luckily we had good people working with us. Some of these guys that don’t have that, you kind of feel sorry for them (F7).

Also feeling financially secure was B1.

Oh yeah. We probably think about it more than a lot of other players, because it’s more . . . we’re closer to the end of the tunnel than a lot of other players. So yeah, he thinks about it, although he hasn’t decided, he hasn’t made any firm decisions about what he’s going to do once he finishes, but he’s got a few ideas. So, the idea of retirement doesn’t really frighten either one of us and he’s never been the type of person that liked the life of an athlete and really liked the press coverage and really enjoyed the cheer of the crowd. Although it makes a difference when you’re playing, having all those people there cheering, but the idea of retirement doesn’t bother us the way it would bother some people that once they leave will miss the adulation and all. The idea of retirement is probably more comforting than anything else and we’ve invested wisely. Like I said, we live a very normal life-style.

A fourth pattern indicated that football wives were concerned about the transition out of football and about what would fill the void.

I don’t know this but that maybe he will never have anything in his life that can fill that area like this does, but I don’t know and I often think that if anybody can handle it, it will be him and that maybe he would handle it better than I do. I don’t know and it’s something we think about often because he’s at the end of his career (F4).
I think because you just get so caught up in it. You get so caught up in seeing them playing and I don’t know. My dad asked me the same question. He said, "why are you so upset? Why would it be so hard for (husband) to get a real life job and do all this?" I thought, I don’t know maybe it’s the things I complain about that are the things that I really deep down inside like him doing. Maybe I like him doing radio and television and all that where I say that but maybe I do. . . . But it can be over tomorrow and I think the things that have happened to my friends in the past have helped me realize that I can’t live and be Mrs. so and so because that’s not going to always be. He gets a lot of attention because he does television, radio, and a lot of charity work, and that’s real good. But when he comes home, he’s (husband). And we were brought up to be who we are no matter what you have or what number you are or any of that. So I think both his upbringing and mine have helped. And I think if you lose perspective of that, when it’s all over, you’re going to have a big jolt. And some people don’t make it through it after football. We have some very dear friends that called Sunday and she has a 10-day-old baby and he’s been out of football for a year and he said I don’t want to be married anymore (F6).

F5 expressed concern over the transition.

Yeah, we think about it a lot. He talks about it a lot in terms of it’s going to be over soon, but he’s not putting pressure on himself about figuring out his career, because we’ve invested our money and done well enough that he doesn’t have to hurry to find a job. And I worry about that because I want him to find something to do that’s going to make him feel needed. To me, I feel better about myself when I have a job and I don’t know why. I don’t know if it’s cause my father was such a workaholic and always stressed to us when we were young that we should find jobs and be making money. And to me I felt really kind of worthless when I wasn’t making any money, even though I was taking care of my child and it was important. I think it was because of the way I was brought up. I felt this kind of pressure, that I needed to be making some money and doing something that was a job and working. So I kind of feel like I’m pressuring him to look for
something to do just to feel like . . . so he won’t feel like he’s not worth anything. Maybe he won’t, he says that doesn’t bother him and that it’s not going to be a big worry and I hope he’s right. Maybe it’ll be a bigger transition for me than for him.

Retirement Help

During discussions pertaining to how the professional associations or the player’s associations helped players and their families plan for future retirement, the wives of golfers indicated that there was a financial retirement plan.

Well, they have a retirement plan. If you make so many cuts, you start accumulating money (G5).

The great majority of football and basketball wives indicated that neither the teams nor the associations did much to prepare them or their husbands for retirement. A couple of wives mentioned an available team psychologist and a career counseling program but these were not thought to be effective.

Yeah, the (team) has a career counseling program. I don’t think it’s very good, but they have one. But that would be a good thing that they could do. I just read something in the newsletter where a company is going to have like a four-week training session for players who are interested to find out what the corporate world is like or whatever. So they do offer that, but individual teams, they could do that more, like bring corporate people in, let them talk to the players, or let the player go into a corporate setting. But the (team) does have a career counseling program but it’s weak. That would be a help (F9).
While two football wives mentioned that the management of their husband's team encouraged and helped players who had not finished their college education, most wives felt that there was very little help available for preparing for the future.

I don't think they do anything. They have these seminars every now and then. Somebody will come out to talk to them. More on a business, more on an investment or business sense. Here's where possible jobs are and stuff like that. But I don't think they do anything as far as preparing them emotionally for what it is going to be like (P5).

No. Especially for the wives. There have been a lot of wives that have had problems, wives that have committed suicide and I have always thought that the NBA Players Association should have something that can help the wives when they have problems. Some sort of outreach program and also for the change when they go into retirement, because a lot of husbands and wives have almost broken up because the husband just does not now how to deal with being out of the limelight, the money is . . . the income is stopped and it becomes a serious problem at home. In fact, during the All Star game during this past February, there was some talk of it and we were supposed to have a meeting, but it fell through from just that aspect, because one of the wives had committed suicide. I said, "my god, this just doesn't make any sense to me, that it could get to this point" (B7).

Well, I think that people in basketball aren't living in the real world because I think a lot of people don't realize that a lot of people are doing what they love and getting paid for it. And they don't realize how hard it is to make a dollar out there and how it makes things easy to come by now because they're spoiled. They stay at the finest hotels and they fly first class and they're spoiled and they're really taken care of and a lot of them have managers and their money goes straight to their manager and they're paid like an allowance and I think that there isn't . . . I
don’t think there’s anything like that that gets them ready for the reality of what’s going to end up happening. It’s inevitable and you have to take responsibility for the future (B3).

F6 agreed.

None of that. And I guess they expect you to be grown-up, but they don’t treat you grown-up, they don’t. The boys have to be here, they’re told when to get up, when to go to bed, when to be dressed, and they’re babied along to a certain point, then they expect them to fly and I think some of the guys have a hard time with it.

F11 stated why she believed that management never would offer help.

I don’t think they ever will do anything. It’s the nature of the beast. They just don’t want to invest the time and the money in players because they’re a replaceable resource, so why bother?

The Future

At the time of the interviews, nine wives were employed, three full-time and six part-time. Most of those who worked stated that their husbands were supportive of them working. F5 is an example.

He is glad that I get out because he noticed the difference when I started, but he didn’t want me to when the time came, he said if you really want to, go ahead. But then when they said you can, I think it caught him a little bit by surprise. And he wasn’t wild about the idea, although he did say he noticed a big change in me after I started back and that he was glad I had done it.
Most wives who don’t work indicated that either they wanted to remain at home with their children or their husband’s demanding schedules made working too incompatible with their present responsibilities. One wife who stopped working explained.

It’s incompatible with the life-style. It’s just too hard and he’s throwing in little barbs. All the other wives are at home and here I am out and he comes home. They go home and they’ve got their nice dinners laid out and he’s got to go to the restaurant and get something because I’m still at work. After a while that gets pretty old and he wants dinner too and I can’t do that. On my off days, I can, but three or four days out of the week I was there and that wasn’t going to work out. If I do anything again it will be a private practice, where I can really work around his schedule. Because I feel uncomfortable not being able to do this. Because I know that he needs to be eating well. I can’t be every place and all things to all people at the same time (B6).

When asked how they would see themselves 10 years from now, only two said that they had no idea or had given no serious thought to the future. However, a majority of the football wives indicated that they wanted either to have their own business or to do some work, at least part-time, in the future. Most football wives looked forward to that time, but one wife expressed her anxiety.

From the past, from what has happened in the last ten years, I think we’re going to look back at these years, and say that they were the best years of my life and I should have done more. And that’s what I think I’m going to be sorry about. But when you are in it, you don’t really care. I guess it’s like when you have babies, you don’t think about snuggling and how precious they are
because you've got one. My back hurt so bad yesterday because I've got this appendage that's constantly on me, instead of cuddling her and holding her, and I think I'm going to look back and say, I really should have done the best of (city) and gotten involved with that group of ladies. I really should have maybe done more for myself. Because I think I'm more afraid of what's going to happen to me, my person, after the kids grow up because I've spent so much time for them and for (husband). I'm scared they're going to leave me, is probably what it is. And I think that's a fear about (husband) and the lookers that he gets. I think that's when it'll hit me more. It's like she did, she went on, she said "hey buddy, you can stay back in the 50's, I'm going out, I'm going to get a job, somebody's gotta be responsible." See, that's how I think I'm going to have to do because I don't know that (husband) will be in limbo, but I can't see him doing a full-time job. I just don't see him doing that. I can see him wanting a job that you played at, but he can still play golf 3 days a week and be on the golf course (F6).

So I am going to have to get a real job. He says that all the time. At some time he's going to go back to work you know. What and make $16,000 a year. But I see that, I see that I'm going to really have to . . . and I compliment myself by saying oh, I'm going to be the strong one, but I feel like (husband) leans on me more than he realized and sometimes I like it and sometimes I just . . . Like I told my dad the other day, I'm tired of deciding who's going to eat and who has to do what and did (husband) get this and did he forget that and why did he take this and why can't he do that. You just want to say, why can't he pick up and kind of help out a little bit, you know. I'm scared sometimes that I really am going to have a lot, I mean more than I want to. Because I want to be taken care of, not taking care of (F6).

The majority of basketball wives indicated that they either wanted to return to school or do some kind of work that would allow them to keep the emphasis on their
families. A few that work full-time plan to do so in the future.

Only a couple of golfer’s wives stated that they may want to work part-time in the future. Most could envision themselves involved with more charity work or traveling more with their husbands. G10 is a good example.

I’ll just go with him on business trips. I think we’ll spend time together that we’ve hungered for all these years. And as far as me individually, my life centers around (husband). I think it’s a healthy thing. I don’t think that I’m turned into him, that I have no identity of my own. I have things I like to do and I think I’ll probably just continue with the types of things I do now. Other than being able to travel with him. Ten years from now, I’d have us real close to the senior tour, which I don’t know if I look forward to or not. I would like to think and know we won’t have to play the senior. If it is there, it’s not something that we would have to do for income. We have planned well enough that that would not be a problem, but if that’s something he wanted to do, then it would probably be fun for us. Because it would be a freedom and for us to be able to travel without the concerns of the children, which is something that is always on our minds now and that might be neat.

Summary

Several patterns of response developed when the wives discussed plans and concerns of athletic retirement. First, because of the option of the Senior Tour most golf wives don’t anticipate full retirement from golf. Wives of retired football and basketball players felt that even though they thought they had prepared, retirement came faster than anticipated and is rarely voluntary. Third,
most football and basketball wives felt that their financial futures were secure but they observed many who would not have a financial cushion and fourth, football wives were concerned about the transition out of football and about what would fill the void.

When discussing how the professional associations or player’s associations helped players plan for future retirement, the wives of golfers indicated that there was a financial retirement plan. Most football and basketball wives indicated that there was little retirement assistance offered. A couple of teams encouraged players to finish their college education, but career counseling programs were not thought to be effective.

A majority of football wives indicated that they would like, ten years from now, to own their own businesses or at least be working part-time. Most basketball wives, but only a couple of golf wives, plan either to start or continue to work, in the future. Most golf wives envisioned themselves doing more charity work or traveling with husbands.

Additional Topic

The subject of prenuptial agreements surfaced towards the end of the series of interviews. Several of the wives inquired as to whether or not these agreements had been either signed or mentioned by other wives participating in
this research project. The wives who discussed this topic indicated that it is becoming an issue that must be faced and dealt with by many women who are engaged to professional athletes. Because it was impossible to go back and speak with all of the interviewees on this subject, this topic cannot be identified as a trend. It should be noted, however, that this issue was of interest to several women.

Recommendations

When asked what recommendations they might have for women who were either planning on or had recently married a professional golfer or football or basketball player the wives had much advice to offer. Football and basketball wives agreed, almost unanimously, on their suggestions. They were: 1) Have a life of your own and don’t change yourself, 2) Know about and be involved in financial decisions, and 3) Love the man, not just the player. A variety of responses supported their beliefs.

I would tell her just don’t change because of the career, because if you change or you let him change you or you let the career change you, then possibly that will be when everything else starts changing too. His attitude towards you and your marriage and if you keep yourself interesting, you’ll always be the most interesting to him (F4).

So, I would say, just like I’ve been telling her, give yourself some time to be married and give yourself time to realize who you are and what you want to do too and maybe kind of put that on the front burner, instead of just being caught up in being his wife. I think it’s real, real important
to maintain that and I didn’t and I haven’t and maybe that’s why I’d push her to do a little more of it. Because I was in love with (husband), I was in love with maybe this whole life at first. And that’s . . . makes me kind of sad when I look back and think it was the greatest thing that was, and it really isn’t because it’s only just a little bitsy part of your life (F6).

I would say that they should have a life of their own. They should have a career of their own, even if it’s just something that you’re doing part time so as not to get totally absorbed by being Mrs. whoever you are, so that you don’t get lost in that and that were he to disappear tomorrow it wouldn’t be . . . there’s no one sitting in that chair, that you have your own worth, a separate entity outside of him and doing things on your own, even if you don’t get a job per se. Even if it’s just taking a leadership position in the community, charity group or specific organization. At least you have a sense of self and I think that is so important that you have that, because otherwise if you just focus all your life around him and his game and then you lose whoever you are, it makes life a little stressful for you. You have nothing else outside of that, you have no resources outside, no network outside and if you don’t have anything else you aren’t going to develop any networks outside. Probably just within that little group and it’s not a very nurturing group. The nature of the group of wives is very competitive and it’s not very nurturing and you need to have something outside of that to keep you grounded. And you need to have people outside who can say “wait a minute, whoa" you know, "cut it." I would also tell them to sign all of their own checks and I would tell them keep your own bank account and don’t let people have access to it. Don’t send your money to your manager and let your manager pay your bills at will and send you little allowances or something. Don’t do that. Because 98% of them are crooks and they’ll steal your money and you end up in a position where you don’t have anything. You think that you do and you don’t (B6).

To be very business oriented when it comes to taking care of your investments, taking care of the money to make sure that you have a knowledge of what’s going on and you don’t give it over to
the agents, the accountants or your attorneys. That you stay involved to make sure that you know what’s going on. And then you just need to have the knowledge of your own. And you have to be kind of strong and definitely be secure about yourself and have your own interests and your own hobbies (B7).

That she be prepared for a rocky road, to focus on developing a strong relationship with her husband in spite of everything else, because everything else is going to be chaotic. If you have that then you can weather the other stuff. She’s got to be tough and to have a good sense of values. To be genuine, to love him genuinely for who he is, not what he does. Football comes and goes very fast and if you love the football player and not the man, you’re not going to make it. You are not going to make it (F11).

As long as you’re happy and don’t try and change for anyone else and turn into what people expect you’re going to be. Then you would stay happy and just go with the flow of things. Things are going to come up, things happen in their careers. They just have to learn to deal with them when they happen. Just try to stay sane through it all. But that’s the biggest thing I hear (husband) say, not to change, don’t put on an act for anybody, just be yourself and don’t try to please anybody but yourself. If you can’t be happy with yourself you can’t be happy with anything (F7).

Setting goals was also mentioned as a recommendation by F8 and B8.

I think from the very start you have to form a foundation for yourself, for your family. I think that’s important. You have to look beyond that and what’s going to happen after football. You probably need to set goals for yourself. When I mean goals, that probably reflects back to what’s after football. Like after football. Don’t get involved in all the rhetoric that goes around in the league. Just be yourself (F8).

He doesn’t belong to you. That’s the truth about anything or anyone. You don’t own them and once
you spend all your time trying to own them, you’re just throwing your life away. There’s so much more you can do. They belong to the public and you can’t get jealous of it, you can’t control it and if they have the talent that’s extraordinary, you might as well accept it and enjoy your life. I think a man and woman are drawn to each other because they are who they are, and don’t try to change. Once you start changing things, everything else is going to change. Just be yourself. Go for your own goals, set yourself goals. Always set goals. There’s no future without a goal and keep God in your life. I mean he balances everything else out. Definitely keep God in your life (B8).

Wives of golfers suggested that it was important to stay out on the tour whenever possible, be friendly and outgoing, and to find out as much as possible about tour life prior to marriage. Comments included.

I would encourage her to cultivate a special friendship with someone. Another tour wife. Not just a casual acquaintance, but try to cultivate a friendship with someone in particular and be a source of encouragement to a husband. One of the things that I’ve seen through the years is that you can always predict when a marriage is going to break up. It’s when the wife decides she wants to go home and have her own career or go back to school or that it’s too much trouble to travel with the kids. Once the wife decides, for whatever reason, that it’s time for her to go home, you have trouble. I just encourage those couples to stay on the road together because he needs the wife, he needs someone to come home to. Home is where you’re together. So, when he comes in from the golf course, he needs someone to share his feelings with because it’s so stressful and I feel like if the wife isn’t there, then it opens the door for someone else’s listening ear and you never know what could come from that. I think it’s real important to get her to stay out. So, that’s what I’d tell her (G10).

So I would tell a new wife to be friendly to everyone, make the most of situations and yeah,
it’s not fun to travel, it’s not fun to do your laundry in a laundromat, but you know, just do it and don’t sit in the room. Get out and do things, get out and see things. Don’t sit in your room waiting for someone to call you. Call them, because they’re not going to call you. That’s just the way the tour is. You’ve just got to call and get out there and do things. You’ve got to be aggressive. Not too aggressive, but you’ve got to be aggressive to the point if you want to do something, then it’s best to call someone up and say "hey, let’s go do this." They’re bound not to call you if you’re only sitting there waiting for your husband. Don’t make it all consuming. That’s hard with a lot of golf wives, all they think about is golf (G5).

I’d tell her to travel and make sure that she likes the life.

Interviewer: Travel before she was married?

Yeah. Uh huh. Go to all the tournaments. Go for a month at a time at least and see. Because sometimes we go for six weeks and don’t come home and then you’re living out of a suitcase for all that time. Be aware of what she’s going into. That would be the best piece of advice is to travel and make sure you like the life before you get it, because you’ve got to know what you’re getting into. A lot of these girls get married and then they start resenting all the attention that the husbands get. I really think they do. They just have to face it, that the golfers are who the fans and tournaments want and they don’t really care if you’re wife or not G11).

G9 felt it was important to be out on the tour but that it wasn’t necessary to travel prior to marriage.

Somebody’s got to be out here. And look at the wives that don’t come out. Some of them work, some of them are just there, they haven’t accepted the golf life. They can’t take it, they don’t want to, they don’t want to deal with it, they don’t like the tour. A lot of them are divorced, and that’s why it’s important. I’ve got a lot of flack before when I came out here, as far as "you
didn’t travel, you’ve never been out, you didn’t travel before you got married to see what it was going to be like, you didn’t check it out, you didn’t try it out, you didn’t test it. And one of the answers I tell people was I didn’t marry golf, I married (husband). And the answer I get right back is, "Oh yes, you did marry golf." Oh no, I didn’t, maybe you did, but I didn’t. It’s a big part of my life and I enjoy it, but thank-you. I always put them down that way. I didn’t marry golf. If (husband) wanted to do something else, I would do it also. I married (husband), I go where he goes.

A wife who was separated offered her views.

Because the tour is a demanding life-style. It’s nice, but it’s demanding mentally, it’s demanding physically and the travel, it’s demanding in the sense that you make a lot of personal sacrifices for your husband in his career. I really would encourage someone to try it out before they married and see . . . I’m so old fashioned, I have a little problem with that. Except gee, what’s worse than where I am now. I don’t know that if I went out I would have decided not to marry (husband), but at least I would have been aware of it. Maybe children might have come later. Maybe I would have explored a career before I had children. To at least to have tried that, to see where it’s leading. The hardest thing that I think now is I’d say make sure you can wing it. Get out there and make sure you can wing it, it’s not what you think. I’m not sure that I knew what I thought it was, all I knew is that we went to tournaments, it’s that loneliness of being in the hotel room, it’s that loneliness of giving up that other life at home that you kind of like sometimes and coming back and you can’t really cut the flowers because you’re having to weed the garden first. I buy groceries to get rid of them. I’ve never really cultivated my cooking skills that well, it was like why?

Interviewer: So, she ought to really know what she’s getting into?

Well, I just think I would explore all the responsibilities that that would hold. I think
that there are a lot more responsibilities that are even intangible. You know you almost see them, everyday what the demands are that are on you. I have the hardest time verbalizing this support sometimes, it's that constant well of energy for that husband, you know. Some men maybe have an endless supply of it themselves you know, but that constant "you can do it, you can do it, get out there" and as I told you, it's so demanding even when you start winning tournaments (G8).

Summary

When asked to offer recommendations to a woman anticipating marrying a professional athlete, football and basketball wives agreed, almost unanimously, on their suggestions. They recommended having a life of your own and not to change yourself, be involved in financial decisions, and make sure you love the man and not just the player.

Wives of golfers suggested staying out on tour as much as possible, being friendly and outgoing, and learning as much as possible about tour life prior to marriage.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The investigation of the effect of professional sports on the wives of professional athletes grew from the investigator’s interest in family relationships in the sporting environment. The study was designed to elicit information and collect interview data to explore trends and patterns which would then answer the research questions. Chapter 5 is a summary of the findings and an interpretation of the results as they pertain to the following research questions:

1. What are the greatest sources of both anxiety and satisfaction experienced by these wives within their marriage?

2. How has their role concept and personal identity been affected by their marriage?

3. What social, financial, and psychological issues of athletic retirement do these wives face?

Thirty-one women who are married, or have been married, to current or former professional athletes in basketball, football, or golf were interviewed, using the guided
interview technique. The interview guide was developed to provide a consistency of topics for each interview. The interviews were tape-recorded to assure accuracy and to preserve all information that was presented in the interview.

Transcribed interviews were analyzed and coded utilizing the ETHNOGRAPH to identify major topics which emerged in response to the research question. During interviews, the investigator also noted nonverbal cues and, following each interview, the investigator recorded personal observations about the interview. Interview subjects were assured anonymity in all reports based on the interviews. Quotations by the respondents were provided to illustrate trends which were identified.

Chapter V will provide a summary and review of the findings in relation to previous research, conclusions and recommendations for action, and suggestions for further research.

**Summary and Review of the Findings in Relation to Previous Research**

**Occupational Impact**

In summarizing the occupational impact of professional sport on marriage it was found that, although most wives said they knew about the sport, they didn’t have much knowledge about the associated life-style prior to their marriage. When discussing what it was like to be the wife
of a professional athlete, and what they enjoyed the most about their life-style, three patterns of response emerged. First, many football and basketball wives stated that money or financial freedom ranks number one with them. Second, the majority of golf wives found travel opportunities to be the most positive aspect. Finally, the off-season and related free time was perceived as a great advantage, predominately by basketball wives and a few football wives. Tensions and frustrations associated with the job included feeling used by the public, the husband’s job insecurity for the football wives, and problems associated with travel and separations for wives of golfers. Football wives also identified a great concern for threat of injury.

Most wives did not consider loneliness to be a problem but the availability of other women to their husbands was considered an issue. Most wives felt that they didn’t have to worry about their husbands being unfaithful, but most agreed that "groupies" are a problem. Given the high percentage of national statistics on extra marital incidence or affairs, the statements by the wives in this study may be an example of underreporting. That is, "behaviors perceived as most threatening by respondents ill be the most underreported if socially undesirable" (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982, pp. 83-84).
A great majority of wives indicated that their parents were supportive of their husband's occupation, but golf and football wives identified parental pressure from their husband's parents as a problem. Golf wives did not experience an off-season, as such, and the off-season for football and basketball wives seemed to vary greatly, with no significant trend. The wives from all three sports indicated the difficulty in identifying and making good friends.

On the subject of coaches and management philosophy, football and basketball wives expressed concern over the treatment of their husband's injuries and the fact that they were treated as a "piece of meat" or a "commodity". The majority of football and basketball wives also expressed resentment about the negative regard or treatment they received from coaches and/or management.

Golf wives indicated that drug usage was not a problem in their lives. Recreational drug usage appeared to vary among basketball teams, with some basketball wives expressing concern about overuse of prescription drugs. Some football wives worried about cocaine but their greater concern dealt with steroid abuse and the attitude of coaches and management about the problem.

Almost every wife expressed either caution, fear, frustration or anger at the press. And although being a
celebrity, most wives agreed, does have some advantages, often their privacy is infringed upon.

This study supports the theory that occupational life and family life have been found to be interdependent. The results of this research show similarities with the findings of previous studies dealing with occupational impact. Bledsoe's (1980) study that investigated the impact of the loss of a pastorate on ministers and their families indicated similar findings to this study. Like the loss of a pastorate, separation from professional sport, or fear of potential separation, elicits strong emotional responses from many wives of professional athletes. Women married to professional athletes showed similarities to the wives of missile launch officers studied by Corwin (1980). Stress attributed to irregular working conditions and hours that forced constant adjustment to husband's occupation was prevalent with both groups of wives.

The findings in this study support the findings by Whiteside (1977), Ritter (1983), Bouton and Marshall (1983), and Crute (1981) about the problem of groupies. The results of this research also concurs with Crute (1981) which indicate the difficulty of making friends outside of sport, job insecurity, and the findings on the fear and impact of injury. This study supports the findings of the previously cited research by Mitchell and Cronson (1987)
which described the problems of social isolation and adjustment to celebrity life.

The results of this research seem to contradict Cruté's (1981) conclusion that, because professional sport recognizes the impact of work on home and family, an increase in both practices and policies which support the role of the family in the work environment can be projected. The current study indicates that wives perceive that coaches and management have done little or nothing to improve the quality of family life and most wives reported being treated negatively.

This study does lend insight into the unprepared state of entry into professional sport by many wives. Problems associated with medical care and drugs and steroids were also described.

Role Concept

In summarizing role concept it was found that most wives considered either the mother/wife or wife/mother function to be their primary role. Two patterns emerged when wives discussed their roles of wives and mothers. The wives reported that they have provided support in terms of accommodations to their husband's sport and their family's needs and as a "cheerleader." These patterns were prevalent, especially among golf wives.
Almost every wife stated that there were behavior codes that she considered or followed. A concern about image, which was described in terms of personal appearance, as a reflection on their husbands or as a role model, affected their behavior. Several wives made reference to the press, of being fearful of the media and, therefore, of "watching" their behavior.

Several personal qualities were identified as being important to have if married to a professional athlete. The majority of golf wives stated that being supportive was the most important, while football and basketball wives identified having or developing strong self-esteem as the most important quality for a wife. Several wives noted the difficulty of developing their own sense of self when married to someone with a high athletic profile.

Almost every wife felt that she had changed as a result of her husband’s occupation. Several wives stated that they were more independent, more self-assured, or more "street smart" than before their marriages. A few wives mentioned having more relaxed buying habits, more dependence on their husbands, less motivation than they had prior to marriage, or being more spoiled.

The wives from all three sports stated that professional athletes do have big egos, with a golfer’s ego identified as being fragile. Most wives felt that their husband’s egos had not affected their own identity.
When ranking their values, the overwhelming majority of wives stated that family is their first priority. God, church and health were also identified as being very important.

Competition among wives, often in the form of jealousy over material possessions, was found to be prevalent. It was suggested that the rivalry or jealousy could be the result of the competition among the husbands.

Three patterns emerged when the wives discussed how their husband’s occupation affects their role as a parent. First, because their husbands travel frequently, golf and basketball wives felt it necessary to assume more responsibility in their parenting roles. Second, several football, and a few golf wives, were concerned about their children receiving extra privileges or becoming spoiled. And finally, the effects of the fathers being in the limelight were of concern to football and golf wives.

It appeared that small children were not too affected by their father’s occupation as a professional athlete. However, as children enter school, their father’s profession takes on more significance. The wives of golfers indicated that, as their children grew older, they felt the absence from home of their fathers.

Professional sport is a "greedy occupation." The emerging trends of support (accommodation and "cheerleading") revealed in the current study appear to
substantiate earlier research and literature on wives support to husbands in "greedy occupations." Wives' advocacy of and catering to husband's professional playing careers has been noted by Green (1978), Moore (1986), Sammon (1977), Crute (1981), Parr (1976), and Blann (1987). The interaction of the wife's role in her husband's work was also noted by Fowlkes (1980) and Gilligan (1979).

Earlier cited research by Zemon-Gass and Nichols (1976) is supported by the results of this study that indicate that it is often difficult for wives of professional athletes to develop their own sense of self. This also concurs with Parr (1976). Bernard's (1987) discussion of the "good provider" role and Ryan and Richard (1973) are substantiated by the findings of this study that identified more dependence on their husbands. It was suggested that the competition among wives could stem from the competition among the husbands. This competition, which may take place off the field as well as on, could be the result, at least partially, of wives or families becoming display cases for the success of the "good provider" (Bernard, 1984).

Trends that identified wives assuming more responsibility for parenting as well as concerns about children being spoiled or in the limelight were consistent with findings by Fowlkes (1980), Sutton (1986), Bouton and Marshall (1983) and Crute (1981).
Cronson and Mitchell (1987) have determined that professional athletes in individual sports, such as golf, seem to have less stability in their lives and probably face more stress in maintaining a balance between family life and a career than those who play team sports. The results of this current study indicate that accommodation and "cheerleading" were prevalent especially among golf wives, suggesting that wives involved in perpetuating successful marriages to golfers may work "overtime" to provide support.

**Retirement**

Several patterns of response developed when the wives discussed plans and concerns of athletic retirement. First, because of the option of the Senior Tour most golfer’s wives don’t anticipate full retirement from golf. Wives of retired football and basketball players felt that even though they thought they were prepared, retirement came faster than anticipated and was rarely voluntary. Third, most football and basketball wives felt that their financial futures were secure but they observed many who would not have a financial cushion. Finally, football wives were concerned about the transition out of football and about what would fill the void.

When discussing how the professional associations or player’s associations helped players plan for future
retirement the wives of golfers indicated that there was a financial retirement plan. Most football and basketball wives indicated that there was little retirement assistance offered. A couple of teams encouraged players to finish their college education but career counseling programs were thought to be ineffective.

A majority of football wives indicated that they would like, ten years from now, to own their own businesses or at least be working part-time. Most basketball wives, but only a couple of golfer’s wives, plan either to work, or continue to work, in the future. Most golfer’s wives envisioned themselves doing more charity work or traveling with husbands.

Most retirement from professional sports is involuntary. Sometimes the transition from a career in sports to another occupation is difficult. Previously cited findings note this transition and the necessity to prepare for life after sport (McPherson, 1980; Rosenberg, 1984; Coakley, 1983; Lide, 1981; Stanton, 1987; Reynolds, 1981; and Michoces, 1988). The football and basketball wives in this current study agreed that there were both occupational and psychological adjustments to retirement, and preparation is needed to facilitate the process. This sample of wives indicated that there was not much help being given.
Observations and Recommendations

Sport became a variable in this study when issues of health, retirement, and negative regard or treatment from coaches and/or management surfaced. Based upon the results of this study the following observations can be substantiated and recommendations offered.

1. The interest and responses from the wives indicated that they were eager to relate their experiences to this researcher about the impact of professional sport on their family life. Before the interviews many wives readily volunteered to participate in the study, even though they had no previous relationship with this researcher, there was no obvious benefit for participating, and no assurance that the information would be useful. The wives were very accommodating to this researcher’s schedule and inquired about the opportunity to read the results of the study.

The candid responses by the wives indicated that they have several concerns and that they would like to have these concerns acknowledged and addressed. Therefore, professional consulting services/personnel should be available to the families of professional athletes to assist them in handling the impact of the husband’s occupation as a professional athlete.

2. As indicated by the treatment that was reported by the wives, management appears to be oblivious to wives or families of athletes; conversely, the wives appear to be
the individuals most interested in the professional success of the athlete. The team can benefit when management’s treatment of families does not interfere with the athlete’s marriage/family satisfaction. Consequently, management should acknowledge the contributions of the wives and cultivate and support the family environment that can assist the athlete, both physically and emotionally.

3. Wives are concerned about physical care and medical treatment of their husbands, including long term implications of drug use and response to injuries. The responses by this sample of wives indicated a "meat-market mentality," of patching wounds or dismissing the wounded and a lack of concern about the welfare of the players with regard to drug usage. Therefore, education should be provided to the athletes and their families, either through wives groups or professional consultants hired by players associations, to provide developmental information to members regarding medical treatment and drug use.

4. The wives indicated that, when they married, they had knowledge about the sport, but not about the life-style. Women married to professional athletes are accommodators, especially those married to golfers. Wives of football and basketball players indicated that it is important to develop your own sense of self when involved in the life-style of professional athletics. As a result, groups or established networks should be organized to
provide wives who are new to the athletic environment information and "survival tactics" to cope in the climate of professional athletics. Professional consultants could be utilized by these groups to help the wives with techniques for developing a strong self-esteem and self-concept.

5. Evidence indicates that wives of professional athletes place their highest value on family life and keeping the family together. Management does not appear interested in recognizing or responding to the needs of the family. As a result, professional associations should provide education to improve the family’s understanding of how to respond to the stress and tensions caused by the husband’s profession.

6. Professional sports agents may have the most opportunity to incorporate life skills planning into the player’s lives. There are different perspectives of sport among management (including coaches and trainers), players, players’ families, and agents. Management has a result-oriented business approach. Players tend to concentrate on athletic skills. Players’ wives are concerned about health issues and about the impact of business decisions on the lives of the families. This study indicates the need for someone who can have both a business perspective and a personal perspective on the development of the player’s families. Therefore,
professional sports agents should develop a comprehensive life skills planning package for the players they represent, incorporating family needs into the package.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

There are many areas which remain to be explored in order to develop more understanding of how professional sport influences the wives and families of professional athletes. The following are suggestions for such research:

1. An obvious direction for future research would be a replication of this study with wives of professional athletes from different sports to determine whether similar results would be found;

2. A longitudinal study with the original subjects would lend new perspectives on the roles that these women play;

3. A study to examine the effectiveness (and/or acceptance) for families of intervention measures, such as retirement planning, role clarification, and career planning;

4. Research studies to investigate the effectiveness of intervention measures if offered by different sources, such as management, players associations, wives groups and agents;
5. A study of the wives of retired athletes 10 years after competition to examine their satisfaction with their retirement status;

6. A study of pressure from the athletes’ parents to investigate the effects on the athlete, his wife and children;

7. Research studies of divorced wives as to what effect, if any, their husband’s career had on the breakup of the marriage;

8. Research about the prevalence of prenuptial agreements between professional athletes and the women they plan to marry and what effects it has, if any, on the women or the marriage;

9. Research studies using a random sample of athlete’s wives so that studies may be generalized to other wives of professional athletes.

10. A study to examine the relationship between marriage satisfaction of wives and player performance.

11. A research study to examine the effects of professional sport on husbands married to professional female athletes.
APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION LETTER
Dear

Let me first introduce myself. My name is Anne Powers and I am a Doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. My area of study is the psycho-social aspects of sport and I'm now preparing to write my dissertation. The study is being done under the direction of Dr. Barbara Nelson, Associate Professor in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at The Ohio State University. The topic for my research involves the effects of professional sport on the wives and families of professional athletes. The subject is of personal interest to me as I am both a wife and mother.

The target population for my study is the wives of professional athletes involved in high visibility sports. The sample will be drawn from wives of professional athletes who play(ed) either golf, basketball, or football. The design will be private individual interviews and confidentiality for participants will be assured. No names will be used and most of the analysis will refer to information supplied by several people. I will conduct the interviews at a location convenient to you.

It appears from the lack of research that the problems experienced by the wives of professional athletes have received little attention. The roles and life-style demands of professional athletics can place severe strain on the people involved. Research on the effects of sport on the wives and families can help us find better ways to prepare current and future professional athletes and their wives to prevent or confront these difficulties. One of the ways this could be accomplished would be through dissemination of the results to athletic departments, player's organizations, or through publications.

If you are interested (and I hope you are!) in taking part in my study please fill out the attached form and return to me in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions please feel free to call me. Thank you for your interest and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anne Powers
(614) 258-1035 (H)
Check here if you are willing to participate in this research study!

Name:
Address:

Phone #:
Age:
Number of years married:
Number of ages of children:

Best time (of day or night) for me to reach you by phone:

Are you employed outside of your home? If so, what is your job/career?

Other wives or former wives you know who might be interested in participating in the study:
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Interview Guide

Personal Background

1. Year of birth
2. Ages and sex of siblings
3. Year of graduation from high school? College?
4. College attended? Degree(s)? Major(s)?
5. Educational level of parents? Parent(s) occupation?
6. HS/College extra curricular activities? Which did you enjoy the most? Why?
7. Did you participate in sports?
8. Do you have children? If so how many? Sex? Dates of birth?

Marriage

1. How did you meet your husband?
2. What attracted you to him? How did the fact that he was an athlete influence you?
3. Describe your dating pattern — how long, how often you saw him, how long was your engagement period?
4. Ages at the time of marriage?
5. How many years had he been a professional athlete when you married?
6. Describe your life/career at the time of your marriage.
7. Is this your first marriage? His?
8. How long have you been married?

Occupational Impact

1. At the time of your marriage how much knowledge/understanding did you have of your husband’s sport?
2. What is it like being the wife of a professional athlete?
3. What tensions and frustrations do you experience most frequently?
4. What do you like most about being married to an athlete?
5. How does the threat of injury affect you and/or your marriage?
6. Your husband is frequently in the public eye. What effects does this have upon you? Upon him?
7. What are your concerns when your husband is on a road trip? Loneliness? Availability of other women to athletes?
8. What is your parent’s attitude toward your husband’s occupation?  (His parent’s?)
9. Could you comment on any differences in life-style during the season and off-season. Do you change residence?  Travel on road trips?
10. Who do you socialize with the most?  (Explore this answer).

Role Concept

1. If asked to describe yourself, what would you say?
2. What is your primary role?  How do you feel about this role?
3. Do you work outside your home?  Why/why not?  Does your husband object to your working?
4. As the wife of an athlete are there certain "behavior codes" that you follow?  Please explain.
5. What qualities are important to have as the wife of a professional athlete?
6. How has your husband’s job changed you?  How do you feel about this?
7. What are your activities and interests outside the home?  Are they influenced by the seasonal aspect of your husband’s profession?
8. Many athletes are reported to have big and sometimes fragile egos.  Do you believe this to be true?  Has this affected your own identity?
9. Rank, by importance to you your 5 or 6 most significant values.

FOR WIVES WHO ARE MOTHERS:

10. How does your husband’s occupation affect your role as a parent?  His role?
11. How do your children perceive their father’s job as a professional athlete?

Retirement

1. What plans have you and your husband made for the future?  What are your concerns about his retirement.
2. How has the professional association or the player’s association helped you plan for your future retirement?
3. How will you be affected by your husband’s career change?
4. How do you see yourself 10 years from now?
Final Thought

1. What recommendations might you have for new wives towards coping family, friends, life-style, and retirement from professional athletics?
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in the study, the purpose of which is to describe and examine the psychological and sociological effects of professional sports on the wives and families of professional athletes. I understand that the conversations will be taped and that the interview will last approximately two hours.

I understand that, as a participant in this study, it is my privilege to remain anonymous and that my name will not be mentioned for any reason in the written results of this research. Because of the confidential nature of the subject matter I understand that, when the tapes are transcribed, I will be identified by a number and only my responses to the interview questions will be used. Furthermore, I am also free not to answer any questions I may be asked.

I have been fully informed of the procedures described above and hereby agree to become a subject. I may withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time.

I, ________________________, hereby grant you permission to publish any material obtained in this interview or investigation provided my name is not used and efforts are made to insure my anonymity.

(signed) Participant (Date)

I have fully explained to ________________ the nature and purpose of the procedures described above. I have asked if any questions have arisen and have answered to the best of my ability.

Interviewer (Date)

Principal Investigator (Date)
Barbara Nelson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
The Ohio State University
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