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## **Brief Summary**

The dissertation provides an essential contribution to the contemporary discussions regarding college athletics in Germany and the US. After theoretical considerations the study is split into two parts: 1. The current state of elite sports and college sports in Germany and 2. The American college system and its wide range of current problems.

The goal is to identify present problems in Germany and the US and to learn from ideas and mistakes US-universities have made in order to develop a new innovative model for student-athletes in Germany.

To combine elite sports and university studies in Germany is a high personal and financial risk. Time demands for success in high performance sports are massive and there is an inequality between elite athletes who pursue a career training at the border patrol, armed forces, federal/ state police and student-athletes whose aim is a university degree. Only those who fulfill the enormous demands of the athletic world survive within elite sports; a hyperinclusion seems to be imperative. Under these current conditions German student-athletes often ask themselves whether to end their athletic or academic career. Nowadays a substantial percentage of future elite athletes choose to pursue a university degree instead of fulfilling the wearying demands of intensive elite training. The situation analysis indicates that the existing support program and co-operation initiative for student-athletes in Germany, the "*Partnerhochschule des Spitzensports*", has failed. Universities sign a letter of intent and afterwards use the label "partner university of elite sports" as advertising without implementing any kind of improvements. Some athletes look for other ways to continue their athletic career and identify the US as a possible "exit" strategy. On the one hand the American college system provides opportunities for German student-athletes, who want to pursue their university degree while continuing to compete at an elite level. Additionally German and international athletes play an increasingly important role in intercollegiate competition. A few hundred German student-athletes are active members of an US-institution and they are by far the highest number of German athletes outside Germany.

On the other hand although intercollegiate athletics in the US continues to be productive athletically, it struggles with its own academic and social values. Once part of the universities most athletic departments often operate outside the university's ethics and governance structure nowadays, while regularly influencing the school's culture, identity and financial situation substantially. After a structural analysis of intercollegiate athletics and extensive literature research, the results are enhanced by an innovative triangulation.

The empirical study is split into two parts: 1. Explorative qualitative interviews and 2. An online survey carried out in the US. The triangulation uses more than one method to investigate intercollegiate athletics in order to receive enhanced results. Explorative qualitative interviews held with intercollegiate athletics experts produce current insights. With these findings the online survey for German student-athletes at US-universities was developed and over 160 German student-athletes regarding their experiences at US-universities are questioned. The findings are extensive and identify many of the present strengths and weaknesses. It can be concluded that existing problems of intercollegiate athletics are wide spread, nevertheless German institutions can learn from the mistakes that have been made in the US. German student-athletes have different social and personal motives to visit an US-institution and therefore experience - different to many of their American teammates - a positive learning atmosphere. The thesis confirms that although intercollegiate athletics is in a severe and potentially self-destructing crisis, German athletes seem to benefit from different services within the current system. The study gives an in-depth look into the current state of intercollegiate athletics in the US and the results offer indications how to solve some of today's problems in the US and Germany.