A College Athlete Essay, Research Paper

A College Athlete

By Justin Helderman

Imagine yourself, if you can, strapping up a helmet before the big game, stretching your legs out before the 600 meter rely, or taking a few warm up swings before you step up into the batter?s box. There are probably a lot of things going through that stubborn head of yours. Now imagine those same things with the thought of having to think of how you will make time to study for the big biology exam the following day. All right now you can quit imagining things. Thousands of student athletes have to deal with this day in and day out. I am just a regular college student here at Appalachian, but if things would have gone differently I would have had a place on the sideline in Carter Finely Stadium. That gave me a flaming desire to find out how much harder it is to study, have a social life, be an athlete, and be successful at all three.

I interviewed someone whom I call a good friend, Arron Dobbings from Nebraska. He will be the starting full back for the Mountaineers in the up coming season. I want to find out precisely how much more difficult it is to be a successful college athlete, in comparison to being a regular college student like myself.

During the planning stages of this interview, I was having thoughts of long bus rides to and from the sporting events, long rigorous practices, and obscene amounts of make up work to finish when you get home. I started to tell myself that I could probably go right ahead and write this paper without taking any valuable time out of my schedule to do the interview. As soon as that thought crossed through the mounded up cob webs in my forsaken mind, a saying that my dad preached to me came following behind, If some thing is not worth doing right, it is not worth doing at all. I am sure everyone has heard that one. Guess what? I picked up the phone and called Arron. We decided to meet at a well-known hub here in Boone called Mackadoo?s at six o?clock on the following Monday.

Right after we ordered our dinner I went ahead and started asking the questions that I thought would give me the answers that I was looking for. Why else would I have set up this interview? My first questions were getting to know you questions or ?Ice Breaker? if you will. I asked Arron, ?Is Appalachian the first institution that you have attended?? With that one little question I found out that my interviewee had attended a small college in Nebraska called Dana. His one year there was the worst one year of his life it seemed. If he had it his way he would never go anywhere close to that little institution again. He went ahead and answered a few of the follow up questions that I had, without me even asking them, such as telling me that he started his football college career at Dana and that Dana is a Christian-based college that really doesn?t care about sports, just books. After that one fallen from favor year at Dana he transferred to Appalachian. At the close of this drawn-out semester he will have completed his first year here, and he will be craving for the next to begin.

Next, I wanted to find out what kinds of restraints are placed on a college athlete?s social life. Arron was pretty eager to tell me about this, as if he wanted me to ask him about it. He started by telling me, ?You should know that; I always am telling you; No, I have to get up early in the morning, or I can?t go eat dinner, I have film session at 5:00.? He began to show me through his own words how much less time he has to devote to his friends because of his commitment to the title ?College Athlete?.

As we moved on through the interview I now wanted to find out about the hindrances on his studies. Arron is majoring in criminal justice, and let me tell you, with this man’s stature, I would not want to mess with him in a dark alley when he is angry. When I asked him, ?How do you balance your time between your workouts and studies?? His answer to me was, ?Time management plays a key role. I make time before I go to bed to write out all I have to do from the next day in my daily planner.? To tell the truth that is something we should all do anyhow. He went on telling me that on some days he has to grab an individual pizza from Stone Willies and eat it on the way to his next class, or film session.

The late evening hours are the only time he has to study. Yet, it is hard for him to get motivated to hit the books. That mainly comes from persons like me who have time during the day to get all of my homework and studies finished. Then we call him asking if he wants to go knock a couple down. I don?t know about you, but I can not sit and read seven chapters in a World Civilization textbook knowing that my friends are out having fun without me, what about you? Arron went on by telling me his technique of solving his problem. ?After one of those types of phone calls, I can only reach in to my freezer and pour me a tall glass of JD and some Sprite.? That would probably ease my mind somewhat. Proceeding on down my questionnaire I asked Arron, ?What comes first with you, ball or school?? Arron Said, ?Last year I would have to say my football play was without a doubt most important but now with some of the injuries I have encountered I can see no future for me in the game, so I want to do well in my schooling.? He goes on saying how he wanted to be someone, some one big. That brought back some of my recollection of those same dreams I used to have. I was stunned for quite a while; all I could do was sit watch him eat his chicken sandwich and munch on his fries. The past can really hurt some times, and this time it was like getting pounded with the butt end of a claw hammer in the chest. With each blow the retraction pulling the heart out of my chest.

When Arron asked, ?Is that all,? it woke me from my trance. I was ready to leave, like an injured dog I was ready to run away to lick my wounds. So I skipped three of my questions to the last two, two that I wanted answers to. One was if you could change anything about being a student athlete, what would it be? Arron started by saying, ?That is a good question.? Then following it up with this, ?If there was any thing to be changed it would have to be the load of pressure that is placed on us. As a student, but most of all to the coach?s aspect, as a FOOTBALL PLAYER.?

My last question for Arron was, ?In your eyes by watching me and knowing my activities how much harder is it to be really successful in your studies and ball play, compared to a regular student?? Being that funnyman that he is he started by stating, ?Compared to you it is a hell of a lot harder.? Then going on to say, ?In all honesty, it is a lot harder. As you even said earlier, a regular student has that extra time during the day to study, do home work, and all of that other good stuff. I don?t: I have to be up at the crack of dawn and I usually don?t make it back to the room till dusk.? With that my interview was complete.

I had a lot of emotions going through me on my solo walk back to my dorm. One, how in the hell am I to write this paper, and two how much I would give to be in his shoes. Considering the discipline that he has to give to himself to make sure all of his work is done, and that he does well in all his classes, I can?t help butt of believe that he may leave here a better man than I. I know that he will be successful in what ever he decides to do, that is just his way. There again I do my best at all that I do, and I see that success can be measured in many different ways. Yes, there is probably more pressure and stress placed on him, than I have on me. In many accounts I am glad I had some misfortune in my early life, that prevented me from continuing my career as a football player. Now I can immolate all of my time to my college education and to my friends. As for Arron, may the force be with you ?man?.

329