

The Art of Athleticism

By Alex Wachter

In a high school setting, one of the most worshipped groups of students always seems to be the student athletes. But, do the lives of these individuals reflect the stereotypical jocks that we see in movies and television? Having never experienced being an athlete myself, I set out to discover the truth. My main focus would be senior varsity basketball and volleyball player, Dana Lundtveit. Being a multi-sport athlete, I figured that she could give a fair insight into what sports life is like.

The first thing I wanted to address was whether the stereotypes are true- are all athletes self-absorbed meatheads that can't hold a conversation unless it's about "the big game" next Friday? As hilarious



as that would be, it isn't all that common. Dana shared that her teammates are actually very smart people, and take a lot of honors and AP classes. She also added that not many athletes want to make sports their main focus when they go to college; rather taking interest in challenging majors such as engineering and science. Dana wants to continue playing sports after high school, although likely at an intramural or club level, that is to say, less intense than being on one of the school's varsity teams.

A topic that came up often during my interview with Dana was that student athletes (especially those who take part in multiple sports) have virtually no free time. When I asked Dana about what she did outside of sports, she hesitated, explaining that sports “take up pretty much all [her] time”. Based on recent studies, this is true, and it is causing student athletes to have much higher stress levels than non-athletes, in high school and college alike. According to Gregory Wilson, P.E.D and Mary Pritchard, Ph.D., some of the factors that may induce stress in college athletes include: “extensive time demands;

... injuries; the possibility of being benched/red-shirted their freshman year and conflicts with their coaches, among other factors (Humphrey, Yow, & Bowden, 2000; Papanikolaou et al., 2003)”. Additionally, Wilson and Pritchard noted that female athletes that were interviewed in the study, “indicated that stresses associated with sport participation, such as pressure to win, excessive anxiety, frustration conflict, irritation and fear significantly affected their mental or emotional health (Humphrey et al., 2000)”.

It seems like it would be unbearable to constantly be on the move, to practice, games, tournaments, all while dealing with the pressure of school, but Dana says that in the long run, it’s all worth it. Being in the athletic community can teach so many lessons,



such as dedication and discipline. It is characteristics like these that Dana's coaches say are vital to making a good player, and that she brings both to the team, along with spirit and leadership. It is because of their dedication and persistence that the girls varsity volleyball team was able to make it to conference last year, and win all of their games. Another benefit of playing sports according to Dana is meeting new people; new friends. Friendships she has formed with her teammates exist both on and off the court, and will likely live on even after high school is over. She says that both the volleyball and basketball team like to hang out outside of school, when they are not busy with practice or games, of course.

Dana does take part in the school's marching band and Symphonic band I, but claims that it is not a big part of her life, and

she does not often have time to practice outside of school. She wishes she would have taken part in some other activities, such as Math Team, or Warren's robotics team, Trident Robotics, although it seems nearly impossible to add anything else to a schedule that is already so full.

After talking to Dana and those that are in her life, I have a new kind of appreciation for student athletes and all the time and hard work they put in to be successful in what they do. What may just be an entertaining game to watch for the common person, is a lifestyle for them- one that requires sacrifices and dedication.

