

Preparing for College Athletics:

Perspective from a college athletic trainer

As the high school spring sports season winds down, some athletes are preparing for the next step in their journey. The step of going to the next level, the “big step” to college athletics. It’s what every high school athlete dreams of. Unfortunately, not all high school athletes are ready for the full time rigors of college athletics. There are many challenges and difficulties that the incoming student must face. Here are some of the many challenges that face the incoming student.

The first challenge is that of college living. No matter if it’s living in the dorm or living in an apartment, it is not the same as living at home. Independent living can be a challenge that many athletes cannot overcome. Athletes have to face the changes of making life choices primarily on their own. Mom and dad are not there to make sure they are waking up in time for school, preparing their meals, reminding them to do their homework, and choosing the appropriate extra-curricular activities. I’ve seen the best athletically-gifted athlete go home after a few weeks of pre-season camp because they cannot overcome the feeling of being “homesick.” Preparing for these difficulties by having a strong sense of personal well-being and a strong support system will help the athletes overcome these issues.

Once the athlete has a strong hold on the first challenge, he or she can then take on the multitude of next challenges. What may have come easy to the athlete in high school, he or she may now be struggling to make the starting lineup or to just simply make the team. Only can an athlete with a strong sense of self drive overcome this issue and push themselves to become better athletes. It sometimes requires staying after practice to get a few more shots up or a few extra swings in the batting cage to work on their skills. The next is the amount of work that is required off the field as well. Whether it is weight room workouts, early morning conditioning, film sessions, or study halls, all require the athlete to become well versed in time management. One who can manage all of these activities along with the enormous task of going to class and studying will be able to come out on top.



Proper nutrition can also help the athlete deal with stressors. Maintaining a good nutritional base will not only help the athletes achieve success on the field but off the field as well. Since athletes are constantly moving from one activity to another, nutrition can, at times, take a back seat. Too many athletes show up to a practice or game and try to compete at the highest of levels on an empty stomach. They cannot due to the fact that they have no energy. Athletes must treat their bodies like the “sports cars” that they are. You cannot win a race, or much less finish the race, if you don’t put the “fuel” in the system.

These are just a few of the difficulties and challenges athletes can face. Luckily, they are never truly alone in this process. Athletes not only have their family and friends, but they have their coaches, athletic trainers, administration, and academic advisors to help them on their journey. Coaches can help them with their skills. Academic advisors can point them in the right direction to graduate on time. Administrators can help overcome difficulties on and off the field. Athletic trainers can help with any injuries, but also help them overcome the psychological barriers of an injury. Developing a proper workout regime, creating a nutritional guide to follow, and achieving better performance on the playing field, an athletic trainer is there to assist athletes every step of the way.

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