

The routine hustle-bustle life of the D-III student athlete

BY MALIKAH FRENCH

STAFF WRITER

The sweaty life of the Division III athlete isn't as majestic as it appears. Hours of blocks, tackles and passes are most commonly followed by an equal amount of time locked in the library. Food, friends and fun sometimes take the backseat for the main two priorities: school and athletics.

"Practice lasts anywhere from two and a half to three and a half hours," said sophomore football player Daniel McFaddin.

"I devote most of my time to my sport and my school," said sophomore soccer player Christopher Gillespie. "I have mandatory study halls, I go to practice and have team meetings — along with going to class and hanging out with my friends."

The drastic amount of time centered on athletics makes it difficult to balance each component of the day without commitment and planning.

"Sports take up at least three hours every week day, and depending on class schedules, it can really cut into time spent studying, doing homework or meeting with teachers," said first-year volleyball player Aly Haslam.

"Being a student athlete entails perfect time management

because I need to be able to balance school, work and lacrosse," said junior women's lacrosse player Elizabeth Carella.

This often sparks a boring routine where each day is the same.

"My days always feel like classes, then practice, dinner, then homework, then bed," said junior football player Daniel Nolan.

Off-season does not guarantee a plethora of free time. Structured practices are substituted with individual workouts and random team play.

"Being in off-season for lacrosse right now, it's a lot of working out, running and doing stick work on your own," said sophomore lacrosse player Chase Rogers. "It's all about having the drive within yourself to make yourself that much better."

"That much better is one more sprint, one more lift in an exercise and always trying to do one more than you think you should."

"There are highly encouraged, player-led workouts that condition us for spring practice," said senior football player Daniel Biggerstaff. "Spring season is two and a half to three weeks of non-padded practice that focuses on technique and conditioning."

"We also have summer workouts that get us physically prepared for camp, during which we have to pass a conditioning test."

The prize for lackluster days and missing chunks of time: representing Guilford athletics, being an active part of the Guilford community and living part of a personal dream.

"You just are more in the loop," said Gillespie. "You are able to meet more people as an athlete, and through that you are more connected to the student body, which keeps you well connected with teachers as well."

"Being an athlete gives you so much more than just going to school: you represent Guilford Athletics, you're actually part of the school and you give yourself dedication for a bigger cause," said Rogers.

"It's always been my dream to become a college football player and Guilford College has given me that chance," said Nolan.

"I love every day of it and can't wait till next season. The extra load is worth the experience of living your dream."

Division III athletes sacrifice most of their day to their athletic and scholarly duties. Weekdays become mundane and the off-season offers little sympathy.

However it's all worth it to be a greater part of the Guilford community and uphold your personal desires.

Surgery nearly shatters basketball player's dreams, not his resolve

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STAFF WRITER

We've all had a moment when we could see our dreams slipping away. For sophomore Ben Stevenson, that moment occurred last year when a serious knee injury threatened to derail his dreams of playing college basketball.

Stevenson had a condition called osteochondritis dissecans, which caused parts of his left femur to break off. At one point, there were four bone fragments in his knee.

This began when he was in middle school, and in 10th grade he had his first surgery. The doctors drilled into his knee, but this did not solve the problem.

For the latter part of his high school career, Stevenson was playing in pain. He recalls that he could feel the breakage, but he didn't let the pain stop him.

"He never used it as an excuse, and he continued to fight through the pain and discomfort and have successful seasons," said Michael Mastroianni, Stevenson's high school basketball coach, in an email interview. "He was the captain of our team his senior year, and he led our team to 20-win seasons in both his junior and senior seasons."

Stevenson came to Guilford to play basketball last year, but he soon learned that the condition was getting worse. If he was going to continue playing, he would need the best surgery available.

In October 2011, Stevenson and his mother, Beth Tarasi, flew to La Jolla, Calif. for a consultation with a specialist. Stevenson was approved for surgery and put on the waiting list.

On Dec. 21, 2011 Stevenson received a call saying a donor was available. Two days later, the surgery was performed, which included merging part of an organ donor's femur into Stevenson's.

Stevenson came out of the surgery in great pain, but Tarasi knew immediately that it would be worth it.

"It was one of the best Christmases of my life," said Tarasi via email.

On the plane ride home, Stevenson felt differently.

"It was the worst experience of my life," he said. "I was passing out on the plane."

Stevenson went through a long recovery process when he arrived home. He could not put any weight on his leg for six months. During that time, he did a lot of deep thinking.

"I got to look at my life," said Stevenson. "It made me realize there's something more to life than basketball. It was a long year, but I grew up as a person."

After the six months ended, his drive to play took over again.

"I give him a lot of credit," Tarasi said. "He worked like a dog. His sports performance trainer had never seen a kid come back from this surgery. Ben did it."

Upon returning to Guilford this year, Stevenson has not let himself become inhibited by the surgery.

"Whenever he does slow down, it could be the surgery, but he never blames it on that," said Caleb Kimbrough, assistant men's basketball coach.

"It is very remarkable, the progress that he has made from his surgery," said senior Kevin Gibbs, a member of the basketball team, in an email interview. "I think that adversity will guide him to a successful season."

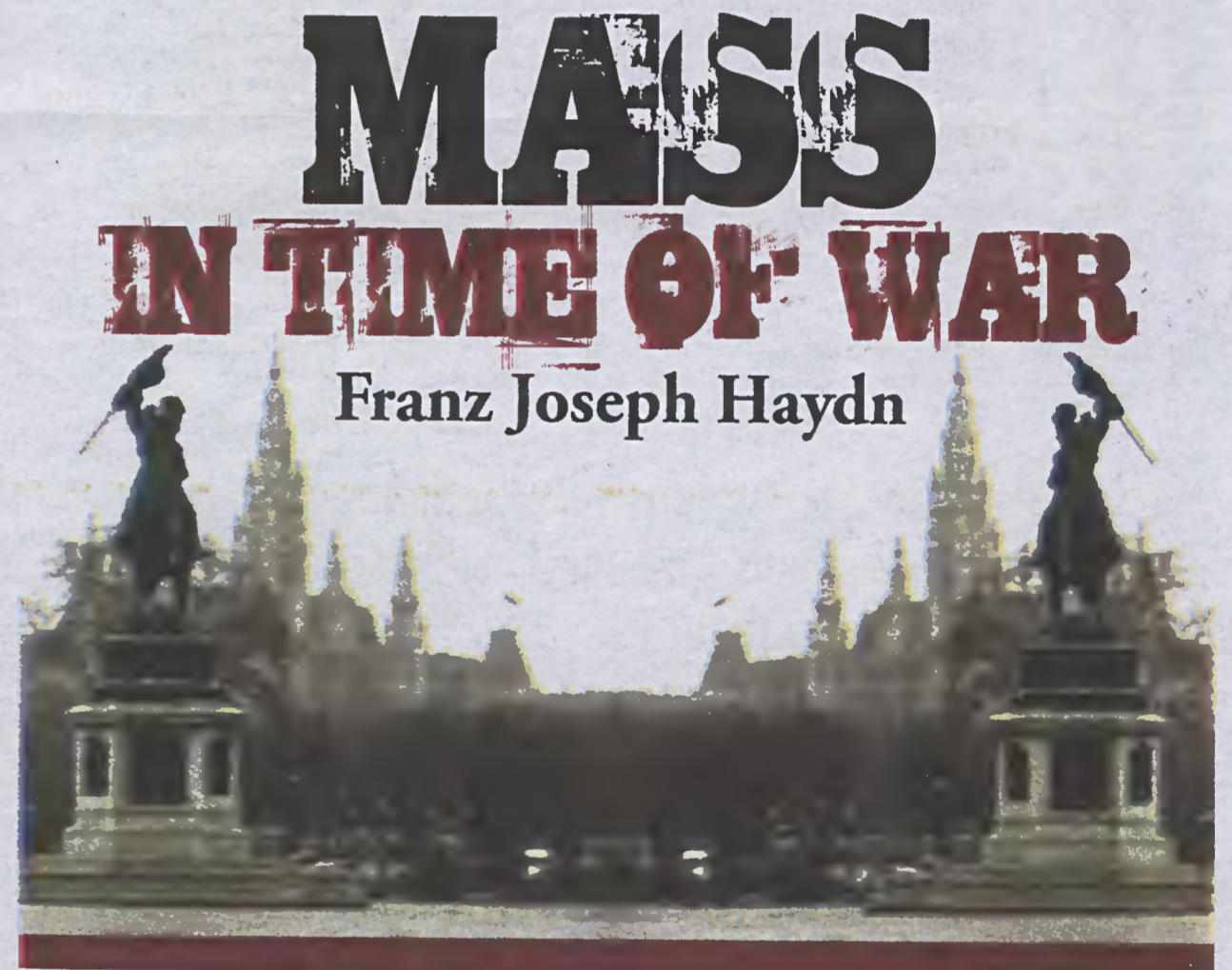
Stevenson is not only motivated, he is also talented.

"He can bring us a little bit of firepower offensively," said Kimbrough. "There's no telling how his role will develop, but he sure can shoot the ball."

Despite facing physical challenges and the fear that he would never play again, Stevenson has become a stronger person. He has learned many lessons, one of which can be shared with anyone who sees their dreams slipping away.

"Never give up, because once you give up on yourself, you give up on everything," said Stevenson.

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