



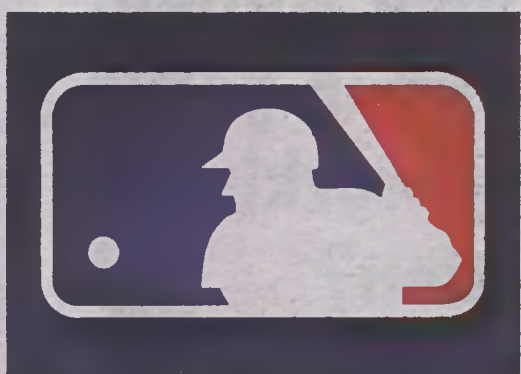
Superstition within sports: the rituals that make the game for Guilford athletes

MANY TEAMS USE PRE-GAME TRADITIONS TO EITHER PUMP UP OR CENTER BEFORE THEY TAKE THE FIELD, COURT, POOL

The women's volleyball team's dance has been a tradition for a long time. The volleyball team thinks that rituals help focus the whole team and prepare their minds, instead of just their bodies, for the game.

ALLISON DEBUSK/GUILFORDIAN

INSIDE SPORTS



WWW.SPORTSANDIA.COM

Major League Baseball preview

BY JOHN KLUEPFEL
STAFF WRITER



U OF L MEDIA RELATIONS/TWITTER

Kevin Ware injury

BY RISHAB REVANKAR
STAFF WRITER

See Page 11

BY LAURA HAY
STAFF WRITER

"Whatever floats your boat" is the attitude that athletes and coaches take when addressing pre-game rituals and superstitions. Routines play a role in the wide world of sports. Guilford athletes are no exception to the tradition.

Guilford football players are no strangers to pre-game routines. For some, a ritual will help ensure a win.

"I always get Matt the trainer to tape my ankles because Gary taped me one time, and we lost," said first-year quarterback Matt Palowski.

Crazy ideas extend across the sports spectrum at Guilford. Sophomore tennis player Turner Votipka ate Bojangles before matches in high school and still does. Women's lacrosse players have a specific practice before taking the field.

"They do a pre-game where they all get in a circle and sway and chant (alternately) 'Guilford Quakers,'" said women's lacrosse head coach Sarah Lamphier in a phone interview. "I have one thing I tend to say, which is 'It's a good day to be a Quaker.'"

Coaches seem to support players' mental preparedness as long as it doesn't interfere with team chemistry and performance. Most coaches believe it helps improve game-day performance.

"I think that if a player feels good before a game because of some ritual they've done, then great for them," said men's soccer coach Jeff Bateson. "The players

need to be as comfortable and relaxed as possible heading out onto the field. I can tell you that if something gets messed up like timing on an away trip the players can get out of sorts pretty quickly."

The ceremonies don't stop once an athlete leaves college. Professional competitors are also known for quirky habits.

MLB player Turk Wendell would plant exactly four pieces of licorice in his mouth while pitching. After every inning, he would dart to the dugout to brush his teeth. At the start of the next inning, he would re-enter the field with four fresh pieces of the candy in his mouth, repeating the process.

Arguably the most historic comes from the most famous athlete of them all, Michael Jordan. The illustrious baller purposely stuck his tongue out when attempting a dunk.

These behaviors become as much a

part of game preparedness as training and conditioning.

"They don't typically affect me, but as soon as I don't do them, I feel less prepared for the match, or I feel that my game's going to be totally different," said Votipka.

The volleyball team's dance has been a tradition and serves a special purpose for the team.

"I think rituals allow the team to come together and focus for a match," said junior volleyball player Meredith Foscue in an email. "I know for us personally, our dance is goofy and loosens everyone up before we step on the floor. It gets rid of some pre-game anxiety. I think athletes like them for this reason because they are not beginning matches extremely tense."

It would seem as though rituals and superstitions are an integral part of athletics at Guilford. Players and coaches alike do whatever floats their boat.

"I think rituals allow the team to come together and focus for a match. I know for us personally, our dance is goofy and loosens everyone up before we step on the floor. It gets rid of some pregame anxiety. I think athletes like them for this reason because they are not beginning matches extremely tense."

Meredith Foscue, junior volleyball player