

Editorial

Paradox, thy name is college athletics College athletes endure pressure, succumb to team expectations

Student athletes at Elon wear multiple hats — you could say they live double lives. The most prominent of those roles is stated right in their titles: student-athletes. They compete with vigor on their respective fields, then compete for grades in the classroom. But does the term adequately represent a multi-talented person equally focused on both his or her academics and respective sport?

Not many athletic departments want to address this issue. These individuals, for the most part, are in college for one reason: to play sports, and play them well.

Sure, they go to class. And there are a select few who are able to excel both on the field and in the classroom. Both activities require intense time commitments.

But the problem is that the number of athletes who are able to do so is greatly exaggerated by athletic departments and the NCAA. The demands placed on these men and women greatly outweigh those without the worries of weights, runs and weekends spent traveling with the team.

In the past month, it has been difficult to watch "SportsCenter" without hearing about the latest news on the numerous football players who are ineligible to compete this season for

academic reasons.

But universities insist on putting emphasis on the student part of the phrase, claiming that these individuals are students first, but also play sports.

In the opinion of one Elon University athlete, the individual said he feels that he or she would not be a part of a collegiate team without actively participating in the sport they play.

"I figure I wouldn't be at a four-year university if it wasn't for this game anyway, so I'm taking advantage of getting the education and having the opportunity and privilege to get that education," the player said. "But I would also say I put a lot more effort into (the sport than academics)."

The player continued to talk about the paradox that athletes encounter. They were given scholarships to perform on the field for the Phoenix, but are told they must maintain pace with their grades in order to stay eligible to compete.

"As much time as we spend on the field preparing for what got us to Elon, we have to spend just that much time in the classroom and studying so that we can make sure we can stay here and

keep doing what we were brought here to do," the player said. "I think a lot of people underestimate what we actually have to do. It's very time consuming."

Perhaps the NCAA should stop trying to force the term upon the American sports fan. Most collegiate athletes are just that — athletes who are focused more on not letting teammates down than having their grades slip.

One Elon athlete asserted that, if given a choice between doing a paper or studying game plans, his mind would be set on the latter.

"I'm trying to do right by my team," the player said. "I would probably

-ANONYMOUS

focus more on the film than the paper."

And the problem is that these athletes are expected to put as much time into their studies as other students. In addition to the expectations for academics, the athletes are supposed to be able to perform in each game.

The anonymous player defines a student athlete as "a student who has a job."

"You have to do one to keep another. If it wasn't for my job, I wouldn't even be the student part of this," the

athlete said.

The athlete mentality requires a shift in which activities take precedence — and sometimes, sports come first.

These are athletes from Elon, which is smaller than most other institutions it competes against. Imagine the viewpoint of an athlete from an ACC university. Would a Clemson University football player be more concerned with a Leisure/Sport Management paper or with a game plan for the Miami University Hurricanes? Chances are, the mind of that person would be more interested in performing well in a game, which could translate to making millions of dollars in the future.

The point is, collegiate athletes are groomed to perform on the field from the first day they set foot on a college campus. Their priorities are torn — they have responsibilities to fulfill in the classroom in order to be eligible on the field. Thus, their work in class promotes their work on the field — the sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction may not come as readily as one not expecting playing time.

"For the most part, I'm not trying to be on any honor society or graduate with straight A's. I just want to graduate and be eligible," an athlete said.

"I think a lot of people underestimate what we actually have to do. It's very time consuming."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

To the Editor:

I believe in donating blood. As an undergrad at Elon, I gave blood each and every semester. To me it is one of the easiest opportunities we are given to save a life. Though I am certainly not an expert, I know that each day across the world thousands of pints of blood are used for procedures as broad as the incidents that cause them. Blood cannot be produced in a lab and does not last forever. The only way to ensure a supply is always ready is constant donations.

I want to give blood. But when I entered into my first long-term relationship about six years ago, I effectively gave up my opportunity to ever give blood again. In 1985, in response to the growing AIDS

crisis, the United States Food and Drug Administration banned any man who has had sex with another man since 1977 from giving blood. To this day, any man who has "sexual contact" with another man, even once, may not donate blood, no matter how long ago.

We all know by now that heterosexuals are just as vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS as homosexuals. We also know that HIV/AIDS is an issue of protection and education and not simply an issue exclusive to the gay community. I could lie to the blood technician and still give blood, but this is only accepting discrimination and in fact, being dishonest, too. We must stand up and fight for what we believe in, but also recognize that blood donation is still required to

help save the millions of people each year who so desperately need it.

For those who have never given before, it's not something to be scared of. For those who have given, keep giving and help others to make the commitment to donate. The Fall Blood Drive is coming to our campus Oct. 6 - 7. Elon has a rich tradition of providing the Red Cross with hundreds of pints of blood each semester. I urge you to make one of the easiest donations possible, give blood and save lives. Contact the Kernodle Center for more information at 336-278-7250.

Sincerely,
Brian O'Shea
Assistant to the Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students

TO COMMENT ...

We appreciate original responses to Pendulum articles. Feedback of 500 words or less can be sent in several ways.

Letters to the editor and columns can be e-mailed to pendulum@elon.edu or sent to 7012 Campus Box, Elon, N.C. 27244

Content will be edited for clarity, length and accuracy. All submissions must include a name and phone number.

A message board also accompanies each article online at www.elon.edu/pendulum where commentary can be quickly posted.

UNEXPECTED EXPENSES @ ELON



THE PENDULUM

Established 1974

The Pendulum is published each Wednesday of the academic year. The advertising and editorial copy deadline is 5 p.m. the Friday before publication. Letters to the editor and guest columns are welcome and should be typed and e-mailed with a telephone number for verification. Submissions are accepted as Word documents. The Pendulum reserves the right to edit obscene and potentially libelous material. Lengthy letters or columns may be trimmed to fit. All submissions become the property of The Pendulum and will not be returned. You can reach The Pendulum by e-mail at pendulum@elon.edu. If you have questions or concerns about an article, contact a section editor. Please do not respond to reporters directly.

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