

Trinity College

Trinity College Digital Repository

Senior Theses and Projects

Student Scholarship

Spring 2006

Student Athletes' Perceptions of the Academic Athletic Relationship

Tim Cleary
Trinity College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cleary, Tim, "Student Athletes' Perceptions of the Academic Athletic Relationship". Senior Theses, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 2006.

Trinity College Digital Repository, <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/83>

Trinity College
HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

Student Athlete's Perceptions on the Academic-Athletic Relationship



Tim Cleary

Ed400 Senior Research Project

Trinity College

December 12, 2005



Research Question

- How do students perceive that their participation in sports affects their academic performance?
 - Do the rigors of an in season schedule hurt or help them?
 - How do students perceive their involvement in sports as beneficial academically?
 - What do the actual participants in this dual-style life feel they gain or loose as a result of their participation?



Background

- The Book *The Game of Life* (Bowen, Shulman; 2002) suggests that students perform at a lower level than the rest of the student body and by virtue of that performance take away from the academic integrity of modern day colleges and universities.
- Personal interest: I was once a student athlete



Background

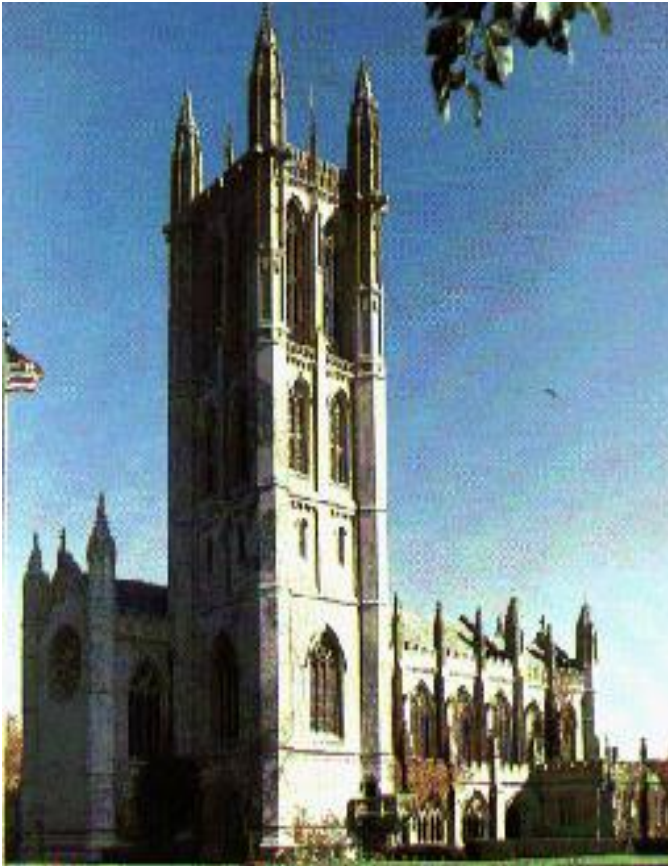
- Many academic minds see athletics as taking away from a college's academic atmosphere
 - “The plain irreducible truth is that there is no rational connection between higher education and professional sports, and universities ought to do other things than field football and basketball teams as ways of distinguishing themselves.”(Hochfield, 1987)
- Others see it as just another facet of college life.
 - “ ‘Contrary to common belief, student athletes are much more like other students than they are different.’”(Peltier, Laden, & Matranga; 1999)



Significance

- “Intercollegiate athletics can be assessed, then, in terms of its direct effects on the core educational mission of a college or a university.”(Bowen, 2002)
- If it is true that sports simply detract from a college’s mission then some action may be taken to make them less of a focus.
- If sports are seen as an enhancement of college life than perhaps they have a greater role than *The Game of Life* suggests.

Setting



- Trinity College is a member of the NESCAC, a sports conference that puts academics before athletics
- Over 50 percent of students take place in some type of athletics on campus
- There has been recent criticism of this goal from alumni



The Two Sides

■ **Maintaining the Goal**

- "I understand why we don't go to the playoffs. They want the league to maintain a focus on academics." - A Trinity Football Player
- "'NESCAC reaffirms the ideals of what scholar-athleticism ought to be. And that is not placing one's first and foremost emphasis on winning games.'" - President James F. Jones Jr.

■ **Missing the Goal**

- "I find it disquieting that in the face of this grim news and our academic reputation within NESCAC languishing, Trinity persists in emphasizing the development of the NESCAC's top ranked football program." -An Alumnus
- "We know our place; we may not be able to compete with the other members of our league academically, but, by golly, we're thrashing them on the gridiron." - Head Football Coach Chuck Priore



Methods

- 16 Interviews conducted
- 4 players from 4 teams; Men's swimming and diving, Men's football, Women's lacrosse, Women's crew



Thesis

- Student Athletes perceive that although involvement in sports may detract from the time a student athlete is able to spend on class work it provides a student with lessons and skills that they would be unable to gain inside the classroom.



Findings

- Time becomes the most pressing issue with all student athletes.
 - “Just lack of time, at least for me, I will find myself procrastinating by putting off homework because you get so involved in your sport. At the end of the season you get so involved that you want to do every thing you can to improve your athletic performance and that might compromise your academic performance. If it is going to bed early and not studying for a test, in my case, I have that decision with practice at five in the morning, do I sacrifice that grade on a test so I can get enough sleep to race well.”



Findings (ctd.)

- Time restrictions can make a student excel
 - “I think it has to do with time management and I know I have two hours of practice at the same time each day and I have to work around that time. I really have to get stuff done before and after that time, or practice.”



Findings (ctd.)

- Most students felt that the skills that they gained as a result of playing a sport helped them with classroom performance.
 - “The idea of working as a team as well as being able to push yourself. In sports we set goals as a team and individually, I do that in other aspects of my life now too, like in academics.”



Findings (ctd.)

- Perceived advantage in what students called the “real world”.
 - “You know everyone says that most employers and job people want athletes or people who have been captains or leaders on their teams because they know how to work better in groups. And if they have done well in school usually they know how to balance time well.”



Findings (ctd.)

- When asked what students like the most about playing a sport they all responded with some form of the words competition and camaraderie.
 - “I think the competition and the friendships I have made. My friendships with my teammates are a lot stronger than they are with anyone else.”
 - “I love being active I love the competition and I love that people are depending on me.”



Conclusions

- While sports may take away from learning opportunities in the classroom, they also generate learning opportunities outside the classroom.
- Sports also provide students with *at least* a perceived advantage outside the classroom.



Implications for Further Research

- See if it is in fact true that students do better “in-season” or “out-of-season”
- See what former student athletes do out of college. Are they successful?