

## On and Off the Court- Day in the Life of a Student-Athlete

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Editor's note: Kathryn "Taya" Tokarski is a three-sport standout at Saint Augustine's College; Tokarski led the Lady Falcons to the 2012 CIAA volleyball title with an upset victory over defending champion Chowan. Last spring, she claimed the CIAA women's javelin individual crown in track and field. Upon Tokarski's own admission, being a student-athlete is not an easy task, it requires many sacrifices socially, physically and emotionally. The Aug Blog recently asked Taya to share what it's like to be a student and an athlete, take your time in reading this eye opening post from St. Aug's own, Taya Tokarski.

If you're an athlete, you know what it feels like to be under pressure, not only on the court/field but off the court as well. Your ultimate goal is to graduate with a degree and leave a lasting impression on your opponents, team mates, coaches and alma mater. The ability to juggle sports and school is one that a student-athlete must master early in their collegiate career. I have learned that sometimes I have to sacrifice the small things in life to be able to play three sports and maintain a 3.8 GPA. It is easy to say that you played on a college team but to be good is another thing. Most athletes want to be the best their school has ever seen and I am no different. Yet, being an outstanding student-athlete requires talent and discipline. The pressure is on you at all times to do your best (academically and athletically). I'll be honest; it can sometimes get the better of you. There are days where you wish your body wasn't so sore from games and workouts and other days when you find yourself on top of the world. Finding the balance is the tough part. You have to make sacrifices if you want to be the best. That may mean not going out on a Thursday night because you have practice the next day or not stuffing your face with a double order of chili cheese fries. I admit, I have struggled with prioritizing my responsibilities, for example, going out when I know I have practice the next day, but come on who hasn't done that?! I also can admit that I am human and have moments in which it all becomes emotionally overwhelming. As a student-athlete, you have to be prepared for the good and bad days.

Many of my days start around 5:30 a.m. with team workouts, which usually run for 2 hours. Then I go to breakfast, class and then try to catch a nap before practice. After practice, it is supper time. I know I always look forward to supper; I get so hungry in practice. After supper, I do homework and try to go to sleep early. On any given day your practice and workout schedule will change, student-athletes must be prepared readjust the balance of school and sports due to the ever changing schedule of practices, games and workouts.

Organization is a key thing when it comes to being a student-athlete. Some days are beyond hectic, running from class to class or workouts to class. And between all the training you have to find time to eat, sleep and do homework. At times, your social life will get take a back seat. People do not realize the hard work that athletes put in to be on top of their game.

However, let's face it; some athletes aren't made to be a student and an athlete. I always thought that the true athletes are weeded out when they get to college level; college is the time when you have to be responsible. You don't have mommy or daddy making your lunches and waking you up every day. Your college experience is what you make of it. Every athlete on this campus has to remember that school comes first; school should take precedence even over sports. You have to have fun and enjoy your times as a college student but you also have to start making decisions, decisions that may very well determine the quality of your future. No matter how tough life can be, you have to always stay ahead of the game. Sports should be a part of who you are, NOT what you are. There are times I complain because I don't always have the time or energy to do what I would like to do but I wouldn't change a single thing about my college experience and playing three sports. It is tough but it is what I love to do. And for all you athletes out there keep working hard and striving for excellence on and off the court.

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