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Avoid burnout by finding balance

By Joy Hollingsworth
HoopGurlz

In the sixth grade, I faked an injury by sprinkling some dirt on my shooting arm and making tears fall down my cheek. I pretended to have fallen off the monkey bars at school and my pops rushed me to the doctor so that the damage to my "scholarship arm" could be revealed. After a two-hour wait in the emergency room and X-rays, I was diagnosed with a severe case of lying and treated to a dose of practice later that afternoon. Sadly this dramatic moment was created to avoid playing basketball on my summer AAU team.

Nowadays, we too often hear about student-athletes who are pushed to the brink of breaking down from absorbing too much basketball. With spring ball in full motion, filled with weekly practices and tournaments, it's important that you try to avoid disliking basketball. Lack of motivation to play, and an ounce of love lost for the game, are early warning sings of burning out. Here are some tips to think about before you start bouncing a ball again after your high school season.

Balance your life

Don't let basketball consume your life. Let me share with you a little secret: There really is life after basketball! Just because you miss a shot or dribble the ball off your foot doesn't mean it's the end of the world. It's important that you balance your life with activities other than practice, weights and games. Find time for studying, shopping for new clothes or playing video games. Put away the sneakers, polish your toe nails, sport some flip-flops and just be a teenager and enjoy life.



Finding other outlets -- like playing video games -- gives players a break from the pressure of basketball.

Play a different sport

My first love is golf. I had clubs at the age of 2 and a picture with Fred Couples hanging on my wall by the time I was 10. Growing up in Seattle, I needed an indoor sport that kept me warm and dry so I started playing basketball in the fifth grade. Playing a variety of sports will develop your motor skills and expose you to different things. To this day, one of my best friends is someone I met at the driving range while hitting a bucket of balls.

Get a hobby

From oratory competitions to playing the piano, I did it all. Investing your time in different hobbies will keep your life balanced. I use to love Saturday morning church choir practices or Sunday afternoon bike rides on Mercer Island with my aunt. These activities were fun and relaxing, but most importantly, they took my mind off basketball.

Real ballers have fun

You shouldn't dread going to practice or hate shooting extra after workouts. Putting time in the gym

should be cool. In place of drills, play one-on-one with a friend, or shoot around by yourself with some music in the background. These are simple ways to get a good workout in without the hard grind.

Make sure college basketball is what *you* want

We college coaches see time after time the "helicopter parents" who hover over their kids and call it being supportive. You have to decide if this is what you want. Sometimes parents live through their kids, pretending to be that blue-chip point guard or All-American post player. Be confident that basketball is where your heart is.

You probably think I'm absolutely nuts. A college coach telling you to step away from the game you love so much? Don't get me wrong -- I love basketball and all of the doors it continues to open in my life. A full ride, a diploma, a trip overseas and now a regular paycheck to coach the sport are opportunities that I would never take for granted. But putting limits on basketball and knowing what you want from this game is the ultimate achievement.

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