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## Make the most of your time in college

By Joy Hollingsworth  
HoopGurlz

College basketball is more than getting laced with the finest gear and signing autographs. There's nothing like playing the game you love in exchange for an education. It's a privilege to be a student-athlete and an opportunity that only knocks on the doors of a select few.

The transition from high school to college is a challenge at first. I've witnessed players throw away scholarships by flunking out in the classroom and partying every night on campus. It's easy to steer away from school and ball if you don't have your priorities in check.

Thinking back to my student-athlete experience, there were times I didn't think I could make it. Running sweaty to class after practice, dozing off during lectures and cramming until 2 a.m. for finals -- this was my life. Every moment is hard work but the rewards are endless.



Being a student athlete means squeezing in moments to study.

### Breaking stereotypes

Academics are the heartbeat of being a student-athlete. With all the academic support and resources, there are no excuses for not receiving a degree. It may be difficult to break the stereotype of a student-athlete who answers, "Umm," to every question, but sitting in the front of the class and being proactive can shatter this label. I was constantly going to my professor's office hours and asking questions to understand the material better. Showing the same level of interest for school as you would basketball, and investing effort in your education, will result in securing a job after the buzzer sounds.

Basketball accounts for a large piece of your time in college. On average, practices range from 2 1/2 to 3 hours per day, with one or two days off per week. You're also expected to lift weights 3-4 times a week as well. Game days are jam-packed with classes, shootarounds, pre-game meals and interviews. After a late practice or game, I found myself studying into the wee hours of the night for a test the next morning. Time management skills are crucial to your success in college.

Traveling from city to city, sleeping in nice hotels, and eating out can be both tiring and fun at the same time. I took advantage of seeing the world by using a camera to capture good times with my team. Sometimes the season seemed like a blur, but having pictures sparked my memory. Some of my most cherished moments came from road trips because it was team-bonding time.

I remember when we traveled to Anchorage, Alaska, to play in a shootout tournament. Even freezing, sub-zero temperatures didn't stop us from having a snowball fight. I tried to drill our head coach in the back of the head with a big, juicy snowball. I knew the precious time she had spent fluffing her hair to perfection and using mousse to get that special curl. Somehow she managed to claw her way to the top of the mountain and hid behind the cabin door. I was so close to demolishing her hairdo but I probably

wouldn't have started the next day.

## Building relationships

Every student-athlete must have a social life. I attended homecoming events, pool parties and movie nights. Because you're handed a large piece of independence by leaving mom and dad, making good decisions and following your gut is important. One of our team rules was to remember if you do something stupid, most likely it would end up in the newspaper the next morning. Like my coach always told me, "You're always in uniform."

The most important part of college is the relationships you build. The relationships you have with your coaches, teammates, friends and professors. After college, I didn't remember the large weight room, cutting-edge training room or stylish locker room. I think back to when we stuffed my teammate in her locker or I received an "A" on my final paper from my favorite professor. I guarantee you 100 percent that you won't remember every score of a game but you will remember the people who played in them.

So after reading all this, you still want to be a college athlete? I highly recommend it. There's nothing on this earth that compares to representing your school on such a high-profile stage that teaches you teamwork, time management, and hard work.

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