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Photo by: Millikin University: Nicco Stepina
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The five stages of an athlete's injury

By: Emily Nielsen

If you take away an athlete’s ability to play, then what are they supposed to do? Their entire career focuses around becoming better, the hard work that is put into practices is the making of an all time best, or the game winning shot. When they are sidelined, when their bodies can’t take another hit or another game, it can be compared to the loss of a relationship. The game is all they know, so when it is taken away the loss can be devastating.

Losing the ability to play is like ending a relationship. This is the closest comparison possible because of the amount of emotional stress the athlete goes through. The sport, the field, the teammates are all still there, yet they cannot participate anymore. The reaction varies also with the injury, if it is not a career-ending problem, the symptoms do not have to be as severe as if the athlete is told that they could never play again.

Dr. Rae Salus, who is the Director Rehabilitation Therapies at Advocate Health Care Hospital in Chicago stated, “When everything keeps going, you are in a way different space, because everybody else is still going on because it is up to you to pull yourself out and tell yourself to stop, that is a whole different psyche.”

Denial

Denial is the first reaction to an injury. It is the phase where the athlete adjusts to the fact that they are injured. Sometimes, this is when the athlete denies the fact that something is wrong, especially when the initial injury occurs during playing time. Athletes pretend that they can play through the pain or injury; they sometimes believe it to be imaginary or a ghost pain and push through it. Freshman football quarterback Nicco Stepina experienced this stage in his fourth week of season. “I was wrapped up from behind by a defender and landed awkwardly on top of my knee. I have never had a serious knee injury so it frightened me when my knee went numb and I couldn’t put any body weight pressure on it,” he painfully recalls.

Stepina was immobile for a couple of weeks before his knee recovered. But then during week seven, it happened again. He knee had swollen to twice the normal size, this time though, it was much worse, he only had about a 10 degree bend. It became apparent that

he couldn’t ignore it.

“After the second [injury] I was really discouraged because I realized this was something that is a very susceptible reoccurrence and each time from now on it will only get worse,” he stated.

Anger

Anger is obviously the next stage of the process. Initially, they may not be able to connect with feelings of anger. The loss of playing plummets them into an unknown, which can evoke immobilizing fear and dread. They cannot comprehend the fact that they are ineligible so the fear, at that point, trumps anger.

Therefore, when anger sets in, it’s because they have let go, even if for some it will only be temporarily. Salus states that the anger continues because the sport has not disappeared; it only continues without the player. “When the thing that you lose is still in your environment it hurts more because you are forced to still be there,” said Salus.

While the team is still playing, still practicing, and still competing, the injured athlete has been forced to limit him or herself. They are now in charge of placing limits and restrictions on the practices and competitions.

Bargaining

Bargaining may be the longest stage of coping with an injury. Since the moment Stepina’s knee gave out, he was on the outside looking in, something he wasn’t at all use to. “I had never been sidelined from a football game, so when I got the news from the athletic trainer that I would be missing week 8 I was pretty down, and that’s when I realized that injuries do happen in sports, everybody risks that,” Stepina said.

When an athlete bargains, they are willing to do absolutely anything to avoid accepting the fact that the season or career is over.

Would they go to Athletic Training everyday before practice and after?
Absolutely.
Being on crutches unless they are in the field?

Consider it done.

There is nothing that an athlete wouldn’t do to compete in the game or jump into practice.

Depression

This stage of the process usually occurs more severely when the player is told that they can no longer have a career, but it is still a prominent factor even in the smallest injuries.

“When I got injured I tried my best to encourage teammates and seem excited for them, but in all reality I was pretty down,” Stepina recalls about having to sit out for games and practices.

When a player is put on the sidelines, that doesn’t mean that all of the fields in the world disappear. It doesn’t mean that the sport magically collapses and is erased from the minds of the world, which is the hardest part.

The continuation of play keeps going, and it keeps going without the player making it so much harder.

Acceptance

There really is never an acceptance when an athlete is forced off the field. The only way an athlete can let go of the sport and come out ok on the “other side” is if they willingly let go, but that would really never happen.

When an athlete is forced into retirement, they feel incomplete. They feel as though they never had the chance to show the world, and themselves how much they can accomplish. Even when they finally retire willingly, there is always that question of what could they have done better on that last day, that last game, that last race.

“I definitely don’t take any snap for granted anymore, because I know that this can happen again at any given time, or even worse injury,” Stepina stated, “The pain portion is something that I, and almost all football players, can play through. It’s the inability to be 100% healthy that makes you a liability”

That is why letting go is so hard, because in sports the drive to do better, to be the best, is so addictive, that is impossible to stay away.

Millikin Medieval Conference showcases undergrads

By: Dianna Leigh

Growing up, many of us whose homes are up north have been to Medieval Times or the Renaissance Fair at one point of time in our lives. While attending, you can experience things such as turkey legs, apple shooting, jousting, etc. And often when we hear the words ‘medieval’ or ‘renaissance’ that is often what comes to mind. However, for some professors and students here at Millikin University, those words do not bring such pleasant thoughts. On February 27 and 28, the Illinois Medieval Association was having its annual conference here

at Millikin. The weekend is filled with speeches from expert guests, professors, and even some of our own students.

After attending the last session on Saturday, I can strongly say that I was out of my comfort zone. I myself am a Music Education major who went to listen to research speeches on the medieval era and its correlations with media, the black plague and even love. In all honesty, I didn’t have a clue what was happening. However, I can say that it was incredibly interesting seeing the extensive research and knowledge that the three student

presenters had on their topics. It was clear to me that this conference wasn’t just something that people attend for the fun of it. These presenters are the real deal and spend hours upon hours prepping their speeches and making sure all of their facts and research is accurate and reviewed by knowledgeable experts.

After the session of student presenters, I was curious about the Illinois Medieval Association and why this conference wasn’t publicized more to Millikin Students as something they could potentially attend to support their peers’ presentations. I first spoke with

Dr. George who explained to me that the Illinois Medieval Conference is “a yearly conference that officially started in 1983. They publish proceedings which are revised versions of lengthier papers each year and are then presented at the conference.”

Those who publish and present are “typically scholars in Medieval Studies who are mostly your professors” Dr. George said. I wondered if the students presenting were Medieval Specialist Majors, but then came to find that Dr. George actually taught a course on ‘King Arthur in Film’ that resulted in a research paper, and the three student

presenters all had research papers that had similar themes. From there, he went on to submit those research essays to the Illinois Medieval Association for review and were approved to be presented at the conference this year.

I asked Dr. George to give a brief summary of each of the student presentations. “Caitlin Husted’s paper was about anachronisms in the 2004 King Arthur Film.” George said. “Taylor Hagerdom’s paper was about medieval iconographies serving modern purposes in 2 films.

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