

THE DECATURIAN

The voice of the Millikin University student body since 1903

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The killing: athletes vs. isolation



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Photo by: Sandy Rucinski-Livingston source: Facebook

By: Emily Nielsen

James Buss was all alone in a sea of people.

This was the NCAA Division III National Wrestling Tournament. Buss, a national champion as a sophomore, was waiting for his second match as he tried to decide if he was healthy enough to continue wrestling.

He was one of Millikin's few survivors at the NCAA national meet in the University's debut year of a wrestling team since 2008.

And Buss was alone.

"I went off the mat with the help of the trainers and the coach and was I just sitting there mat side," Buss said. "We had our 141 pounder wrestling, so they had to go and help him but then after that they left me there for about 2 and a half hours alone."

Buss spent the entire year wrestling with a broken foot. But on that day, the pain was too intense. Despite the hopes of Millikin, the coaches and the fans, Buss had a decision to make.

Alone.

He couldn't go on.

An athlete is a warrior, mentally, and physically they can take on much, even playing on a broken foot for a season.

What can crush an athlete though is surprisingly simple; it is the isolation that devours their beings during the time in which they are forced to sit on the sidelines

"We use our bodies in incredibly difficult ways, that probably sometimes weren't meant to be used as much in that way as we use them," Dr. Craig White, Millikin's Athletic Director stated. Because of this fact, athletes can't always articulate how they feel when their bodies finally give up too early.

James Buss is a transfer student from Loras College. His sophomore year he went to the NCAA National meet where he became a two-time All American wrestler, and ever since then, he has been itching and working to get back to that meet.

His junior year he didn't wrestle due to disagreements, which lead to panic attacks and anxiety, resulting in him saving a year of eligibility. When Buss learned that Loras College's assistant coach Ryan Birt was moving to Millikin to be the head coach of a brand new team, he took his talent and transferred here to try again and pursue that NCAA title.

This year he finally made it to the

Nationals, but in the middle of his first match, the pain in his foot that had been hindering his talent all season flared to the point where he could not move anymore. Sometime during his brief stint on the Millikin football team he rolled his ankle one too many times and it then became worse, Buss had broken his foot.

Of course in true athletic fashion, his foot was amazingly painful, but he didn't stop competing. He went to the trainers, but didn't get x-rays. His body was telling him that he shouldn't go on, but he ignored it. "I was told it was just a sprain, that nothing was wrong with it," Buss stated.

By day he wore a boot and by night he wrestled.

"The realization that you can no longer do your favorite thing, sets you in a state of mind that you are the only one suffering and that no one else can help you with what you are going through," said Andrew Griffin, a former Millikin swimmer.

An athlete is lonely when they are forcefully cut off from something that defines their every move. There is a black hole that can swallow them up and isolate them into thinking that they

can not talk to anyone, that they alone are in this, and that no one, not their coaches or the trainers can help them. They have let their teammates down, they have let their coaches and parents down, and most importantly they have let themselves down.

The mindset is as follows: they couldn't do pull through the pain. They were too weak, too slow, and their bodies were too frail to keep up with their minds. The athletes are completely at war with themselves, and it is all mentally driven.

"I feel the isolation simply came from me not being able to play ball with them. I felt left out and alone because I had to watch them finish off what we had worked so hard for," Nico Stepina, Millikin's football Quarterback stated about his knee injury.

Buss went from the national meet to a hospital in Iowa and had x-rays done. The regular doctor said nothing was wrong, but when the x-rays went to the specialist they found bone deformities, which lead to the conclusion that it had definitely been broken in the beginning of his wrestling season.

He went to Rush Hospital in Chicago where he learned that while the bone had healed properly, the specialists still

wanted to preform surgery to shave the bone, remove any other bone fragments and repair all of the ligaments that were destroyed as he wrestled.

After his surgery that was performed on April 22 he is on an intense road to recovery.

"No weight on it for 6 weeks, and from what I've heard it could be anywhere from 4 to 6 months before I am back to normal," Buss stated.

Not only did Buss have to give up one of his last chances to walk out of the NCAA national meet with a title, but he also had to give up his sport, and his team, at least temporarily.

"Suddenly you are not apart of the group, and, it depends on the situation but you could be isolated, in some ways you are no longer competing at least temporarily or sometimes permanently and all that goes with that," Dr. White said.

Injured athletes feel as though they cannot turn to anyone, they are taught to play through pain, and yet there they sit on the sidelines all they have is their thoughts. Buss sat there, alone and in pain as around him the meet continued. People cheered, bodies hit the mat. His competition went on to finish without him as he sat isolated with his thoughts.

International student organization hosts international carnival

By: Chris Diver

This year's Advising Day wasn't just about picking out classes for next year. Students gathered on the quad to celebrate the first ever International Carnival.

The International Student Organization hosted a carnival in which several international students

came together to display some aspects of their culture through events, art, and other talents. This event was open to Millikin students and was run by the ISO with some help from both Alpha Phi Omega, who offered snacks, and Sigma Lambda Beta, who cooked on the grill. Several other student organizations, also volunteered their

time, such as LASSO.

According to Briana Stephens, the coordinator for ISO, "It actually wasn't my idea to host the event. It was actually the students who wanted to find a way that they could incorporate the rest of campus and bring awareness to the international students, as well as the organization as a whole. The

students also saw this as being a great way to bring students around campus together, and since it has been nice lately, it would be the best time to do this."

ISO President Dawn Biza said, "I live in the United Kingdom, and every summer we have a national carnival at Notting Hill, in which

Londoners from different cultures gather together to celebrate our different cultures. As president of ISO, I wanted to host a big event for the semester, especially in the spring when the weather would be nice out, to involve all of campus and would showcase all the international cultures.

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