



In This Issue...

News: Barefoot and Bluejeans with Ms. Millikin

Opinion: Staying healthy in college

Features: Greek president spotlight: Cole Sondgeroth

Sports: MU Baseball vs. IWU

Arts: Wind ensemble ends on a high note

THE DECATURIAN

The voice of the Millikin University student body since 1903

The final solution: what was learned



Photo by: Kevin Krows: James Buss



Photo by: Kevin Krows: Kelsey Going



Photo by: Kevin Krows: Nicco Stepina



Photo by: Kevin Krows: Sami Battle

By: Emily Nielsen

I was expecting a villain. I was expecting to find a clear-cut reason as to why athletes play during an injury, and why no one stops them.

I was expecting to be able to point at someone and say, "this is your fault" while jumping around in accomplishment of my earth-shattering epiphany.

I was wrong about absolutely every expectation.

There was no villain in the stories I told.

The athletes I interviewed were not humans, too stubborn to give up something that defines almost everything about their personality. Everyone has that stubborn streak, that part of themselves that refuses to give up, even if it is a hopeless case. Athletes are a great example of those qualities. As athletes we have one common goal, and that is to play with every ounce of stamina we have, to not give up, to not give in. When injured, we feel as though we have given up and given in, we can't understand that this is not our fault, that our bodies simply can't take what we throw at them, that it became too much, and we were crushed under the pressure.

This shredded my theory that someone was at fault. No one is really to blame when it comes to an injury; it is a series of unfortunate events on everyone's part. The athlete not speaking up, results in the coaches and athletic trainers not knowing that every practice, every set, is only hurting the athlete in question. These professionals can't read minds, which in retrospect is good for hiding pain, but bad for

the body. Stubbornness runs in our veins along with perseverance, and fabricated invincibility.

As an injured athlete myself I went into this project thinking that I knew what I was talking about. I have dealt with shoulder problems since the age of 16 and had thought I learned everything I could about the mental and physical problems that an athlete goes through. I thought I knew enough to educate these athletes and the readers that for the rest of their lives the athletes would be getting out of bed in the morning shuffling and groaning in pain like me and many others before me do everyday.

Again I was proven wrong.

Although very similar, because every single athlete goes through mental blocks and physical limitations, they go through the experiences differently. A couple of them, like Kelsey Going and Nicco Stepina, accepted their injuries surprisingly quick and overcame them with little problem. They understand that the only way that there is a light at the end of the tunnel is through acceptance and hard work. They were inspiring and it was great fun to hear their stories, because it was so different to my experience. They work through the pain diligently and without much complaint.

It was also a strange new experience, seeing athletes readily take care of their injuries, with little protest. They didn't battle with their coaches and athletic trainers, at least not from what they readily told me. They were totally focused on overcoming whatever ailment, whether a dislocating knee or something else, while also playing

the game. They didn't deny, or were appalled with the injury either. It was surreal in a way, it felt like I finally saw what was at the end of that tunnel. For a moment I wished that I could have had that type of mindset, but then realized it was so much more fun to be stubborn and argumentative.

On the other hand, there were athletes who were angry at everything and everyone over the fact that they could not play, and refused to go and get help. Sami Battle was the prime example of this avenue. Swimming on a terrible shoulder she never, I repeat never, got out unless she was forced to do so by her coaches or the athletic trainers. As a journalist I wanted shake her and tell her that she was only hurting herself more by being stubborn. But as an injured athlete I wanted, in a way, to commend her for swimming through the pain. I understand her plight because she is on the same road that I travelled, not accepting the fact that her body can't do what she wants after her shoulder gave up.

As humans we are that way, telling everyone else to be careful while we stand on the edge of the cliff seconds away from jumping. I have found myself there too many times to count, we all have.

Not only was I wrong in every single one of my theories, I was also wrong to believe that these articles weren't going to be read. Every single time someone would come up to say good job, or I would see them sitting on a bench reading I would be confused, because who wants to read six articles about crazy athletes playing through amazing amounts of pain? Apparently

a lot of people wanted to, and many people did. It was always amazing to hear how much people were interested in something I myself thought I was obsessed with. Thank you for giving validation to that obsession.

The pain doesn't matter. It will always be worth it. There will always be the twinge of annoyance as we wake up to stiff knees and shoulders. In order to get out of the bed joints will crack and muscles will protest and we will wonder if we could have done something different. When the air becomes humid and walking becomes an unwanted challenge while

everything else just hurts there will always be that tiny question of why.

But ask an athlete, if it was worth it and they will always say yes. No matter the physical pain that they are in that day, whether they are retired or still limping around, it's never, not worth it. What we went through, what we go through, was and always will be a price we are willing to pay. There was no other choice but to go for the record, the game winning shot, the historic season, or even just the chance to play the game.

Like the saying goes, "pain is only weakness leaving the body."



Photo by: Mary Kay Nielsen: Emily Nielsen and parents

How to Contact Us:

E-mail Us:

chusted@millikin.edu

Visit our website!

www.decaturian.com

Become a fan of the *Decaturian*



www.facebook.com/Decaturian



www.twitter.com/decaturian

NEXT ISSUE...

May 11

Departments

News	1, 2, 3
Features	4
Arts.....	5, 6
Views and Opinions.....	7
Sports.....	8