

THE DECATURIAN

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Playing Through Pain: The Price Millikin Athletes Pay in Order to Play

By: Emily Nielsen

In recent years, there has been controversy over whether or not Division I athletes should get paid to play sports at university level. Division III athletes however, will never have the chance to have monetary compensation for the work they put into both their athletics and their classes, making them the true upholder of the term "student athlete."

Division III athletes face every obstacle that Division I athletes faces; they work just as hard on the field and in the weight room, and they pay the same price that Division I athletes pay—not the cost of tuition, but rather the price of what it pays to play the game

they love.

Over the next six weeks The Decaturian is going to take a look at that price and why we do what we do.

In six articles we will explore what it means to be a Division III athlete, and particularly what it means to be an injured Division III athlete. We will explore the mindset of the athlete, and what it means to them to play and play injured. We will go through the mentality they have when they're told that playing the sport they love will only hurt them more, or when they are told they can no longer play due to the fact that their body simply cannot take any more beatings. We will learn that these athletes will pay that price

and more, to achieve the goals they set for themselves, and for their team purely because they cannot stop playing the game.

At the end of the journey, we might have the start of an understanding of what we do as college athletes, and why we should do it. Maybe it will convince us to stop destroying our bodies, or maybe it will give us answers to why we did what we did in order to play. At no point so we wish to make any of the athletes believe that they did something wrong. After all, I'm one of those athletes who played through pain for over four years, and I will live with this pain for the rest of my life. Maybe this will help everyone, including myself, understand why.



Photo by: Emily Nielsen: Samantha Battle swims the 1650 at Illinois College in January 2015
Part 1 of 6

Pain is weakness leaving the body

By: Emily Nielsen

"Pain is weakness leaving the body" may be the most insane saying to come out of an athlete's mouth.

Pain is not weakness; it's not something to overcome. Pain is the brain's way of informing the body to stop. Pain is the defense mechanism that should prevent further harm, yet athletes see it as an obstacle to overcome.

"The pain wasn't going to stop me, I can't let it stop me because I can't sit on the sidelines," said sophomore Samantha Battle.

Everyone has experienced pain, whether by falling off a swing or burning a hand on a hot pan, there was pain. What should be, and usually what is, first response to pain is an immediate stop to whatever created the pain, hence snatching the burned hand off the pot.

Athletes learn to ignore that response and play through the pain; they play through pulled and torn muscles, dislocated joints, concussions and, sometimes, the only thing that completely puts an end to their playing is physically not being able to stand without collapsing.

Battle has been playing sports her entire life; she goes from one season to the next, never without a break, never without a day of practice. In high school it was track in the spring, basketball in the winter and in the fall

she both swam on the swim team and played volleyball. In college, Battle has slowed down to just two seasons, from September to February in the pool, then from January to March on the track team.

"I don't know if I could just sit still and do nothing, that is why surgery isn't an option," Battle said. "I wouldn't be able to sit still."

She would most likely go crazy if she weren't in a pool, on a track or running up and down a court and it shows in her records and accomplishments here at Millikin University. Yet, the girl behind those records and achievements struggles with shoulder injuries that she has acquired while playing the sports she loves.

In the 2014-2015 season, as a freshman, Battle had almost every Millikin Swim Team sprint record either broken or within her grasp by December. She was and is well on her way to becoming one of the best swimmers Millikin has ever seen. As a swimmer, high jumper and sprinter her shoulders were susceptible to injury.

Due to the overall weakness of her joints, during her first winter training trip Battle was getting out of the water when she felt a sharp pain rip through her shoulder. In true athlete fashion, Battle got right back into it, ignoring the pain until she could no longer rotate her arm.

"I was really upset, but more mad at

the fact that it tore my freshman year," Battle said "I am a very active person and with my shoulder my other sports are limited as well, I'll never be at 100 percent."

Surgery wasn't recommended right away, Battle was told that she could keep playing as long as she could build the strength in her shoulder.

That is easier said than done.

Before practice, Battle walked into the Athletic Trainers room for strength training and warming her shoulder up for practice.

She performs an exhausting regimen of exercises that builds her shoulder strength at a minuscule rate because she jumps into a pool soon after, negating almost everything she just accomplished within the AT room.

The exercises don't take away the pain either, but the physical pain she feels can never outweigh the emotional pain of sitting out.

"There is no way that I could sit and watch the team swim while I did nothing, and you can't not think about it, so it is easier to focus on the workout rather than stopping," she said.

Kelsey Going is another Millikin athlete who sacrificed her physical being for the love of the game.

Going was a four-year varsity basketball player for Millikin and was injured and had surgery in March 2015, but still has played with dislocating

knees since she was in high school.

"They told me then I needed surgery but I put it off for seven years because I played year-round sports and had no time," Going said. "I knew I could push through the pain and my team needed me."

Going kept going because she loved the sport.

She usually limps when she runs, and she can't cut or turn as fast as she used to. Her knee can dislocate at any given moment -- and has -- but she never wanted to let her team down.

The hardest part for an athlete, Going said, is how the body changes to compensate for the injury.

"It creates pain and other injuries elsewhere," she said. "You can't play like you used to be able to."

Pain isn't weakness.

It isn't something to overcome or ignore.

But don't tell an athlete that.

To them, the game is more important.

It's seen as they limp down the court, or leave themselves from the pool with only one arm. When they clench their fists and try to breathe, they try not to show their coaches how much it hurts.

Pain is something people like Battle and Going will live with everyday of their lives because they sacrificed their physical well being for the thrill of doing something they love.

TKE biggest loser

By: Chris Diver

Rush week at Millikin has come to an end and new members have started settling into Greek Life and getting used to their new fraternity or sorority.

While these groups are considered "social fraternities," each house on campus is connected to philanthropic causes in one way or another. One of the fraternities on campus is working with their philanthropic causes currently by way of hosting a fundraiser.

Tau Kappa Epsilon is hosting a Biggest Loser competition fundraiser in which participants make up teams of five and over the next eight weeks, compete to see which team can lose the most weight overall.

To join the competition and compete, each contestant paid a fee, but part of the funds raised to compete will be going to St. Jude's Children's Hospital, one of the fraternity's philanthropic organizations, and the rest is a cash prize for the winning team.

Teams weighed in on Feb. 18-19 and the competition began on those days.

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