

There is a certain stigma that surrounds athletes, especially in high school and college, which works as a double-edged sword; the pride of being a collegiate athlete brings with it a great deal of social power, and when this power is misused it often results in dire consequences. The athletes of Hobart and William Smith are no exception when it comes to carrying this responsibility; as students of a small liberal arts college, they are ultimately tasked with the challenge of efficiently balancing their social life, athletics, and academics, but also in a manner that best represents the school. In sitting down with former statesman football coach, Mike Cragg, he identified this balance and its resulting success as “The Hobart and William Smith Way”, emphasizing the importance of building an athletic culture. Of course, any form of construction comes with obstacles along the way that can affect the overall outcome, and Hobart’s athletic culture is no exception.

Growing up in Geneva, New York, my overall perspective of Hobart’s culture is constantly changing and evolving due to me being “townie”, as non-local students have dubbed us residents. When I first began playing youth lacrosse, the Hobart lacrosse team had a very close connection with the YMCA Youth Lacrosse program, and actually offered me my first few on-campus stays through their summer training camp. This bond was the result of fortuitous connections between the Geneva and Hobart lacrosse communities, especially because of Alex Love, a Geneva High School graduate, who was Hobart’s all-star player at the time. The youth teams were especially fortunate, however, because one of the lead coaches was the neighbor of Hobart’s, now former head coach, T.W. Johnson, a man who was more than happy to flaunt his players for my team’s enjoyment. To us eleven and twelve-year-olds, these athletes were simply the pinnacle of awesomeness; I remember my personal idol was Reid Rozello, a player who’d been Hobart’s star defenseman from 2010-2012 and had sparked my love for the defensive unit.

Now a Hobart junior, I of course chuckle at these memories, especially because of how naive an eleven-year-old can be in thinking that athletes are set up for life the moment they step onto a college field. Most of the guys we idolized, Rozello included, now have professional day jobs and have left the sport entirely, while a few like Alex Love, heavily relied on lacrosse throughout their time at Hobart and William Smith, and briefly played professionally. That said, with maturity, it becomes easier to recognize the various paths of life and success that one can take, and being enrolled as a student has revealed elements of the academic and athletic sides of HWS's culture.

Statesmen Football coach, Kevin DeWall, stated "Here at Hobart [and William Smith] we truly pride ourselves on being great student-athletes", and identified that the dueling responsibilities for student-athletes are crucial during the transitional period of a college student. Being a small liberal art college, Hobart and William Smith is very unlikely to be selected as a direct route to professional sports, and therefore it is far more academically centered in regard to its larger culture when compared to larger state schools such as Ohio State or LSU. Even so, college athletes still hold an advantage in regard to social power, particularly if said athlete is male and participating in a popular collegiate sport such as football or lacrosse.

While colleges do have general athletic standards, guidelines, and tolerance policies, coaches tend to enforce their own rules pertaining to those elements. Team-based sports at Hobart and William Smith are especially intriguing due to the contrasts in team policies, tolerance, and ethics, as some drastically vary in comparison to others, while still sharing some similarities. For instance, the William Smith Soccer team does conduct drug testing, while the Hobart team does not, indicating the presence of variances in drug testing policies.

This college and community bond came to an end in 2014, however, following Johnson's departure and by that point, Geneva's glamorous view of the collegiate athlete had utterly been tarnished.

In 2013, both the Hobart and William Smith and Geneva communities were rocked when a major rape case occurred, involving three Statesmen football players and a first-year girl, named Anna. The incident occurred in September, just fourteen days into the academic year, and the disciplinary process that followed only took twelve days, which resulted in all three of the accused football players being cleared. When the school initially tried the three upperclassmen, Anna's story was improperly represented, as the results of the sexual assault kit had not been documented, and the story of the perpetrators was better supported as they were members of the colleges most popular sports team, leaving key witnesses the ability withhold testimony.

While Anna's story failed to turn heads on campus, it became a national news story upon being covered by outlets from the New York Times to BuzzFeed