

The Student-Athlete Dilemma

Being a student-athlete is very challenging. It often involves the student-athlete's physical, emotional, and mental commitment. From my observation as parent of two former NCAA student-athletes who played basketball and football, you learn quickly or not so quickly that a career student-athlete is only as far as a coach deems it should go. It doesn't matter the skill, talent, or work ethic. You can come floating from the sky with diamonds and minerals and the skills of God. The industry, the world of sports, from my observation, can destroy a student-athletes life with career-ending injuries, both mental and/or physical, and not give a damn. What is a student-athlete to do when they are told to keep working hard? Hard work pays off when these words hold zero meaning in the world of sports. A student-athlete is being told to be a practice body, fulfill some diversity school requirement, or who knows. The recruitment trips to the school sell you a *dog and pony* show that many athletes will not even have a chance to experience because they are not on the coach's list to excel forwards. From my observation, the athlete does not know the real deal, and the current athletes are told not to reveal the real deal until a recruit's name is signed on the dotted line. So, this is an unevenly negotiated contract that will result in many cases with the student-athlete being hurt.

The reality being a student-athlete; the sad truth is that many student-athletes are taken advantage of by those in positions of power within their sport. From my observation, many student-athletes end up with short-term or long-term issues such as a perfectionist complex, losing touch with reality, PTSD, and multiple personalities. In the sports industry, authorities may abuse their authority, leading to an unhealthy environment for the athletes. These fame and money programs and coaches will take student-athlete, destroy them and label them weak. Friends and family members may pressure the athlete to perform at their highest level at all times, leading to burnout. The media may target certain athletes to sell stories, which can lead to mental health issues for the athletes involved. All of these factors contribute to an incredibly challenging experience for student-athletes nationwide. The negativity from fans can be detrimental. Most fans and regular folk can't understand and can't fathom or handle this pressure.

When a student-athlete considers quitting their sport, it could be one of their life's most challenging emotional decisions that can take a lot of thought and consideration. Many factors go into this decision, such as the athlete's health, dedication to the sport, relationship with their coach, and support system at home. This is a decision that should not be taken lightly, as it can have a significant impact on the athlete's life, both short-term and long-term.

them. Fans may feel betrayed, coaches may feel disrespected, and family members may feel disappointed. Athletes must remember to make this decision for themselves and not anyone else. While it may be challenging to deal with the backlash from those closest to them, the coaches and the fans, which from my observation can be very evil, it is crucial to stay true to oneself and do what is best for one's well-being.

If you are a student-athlete reading this considering quitting your sport, know that it is okay to put your well-being first. Make sure you have considered all the factors involved before making your decision, as it can be tough to reverse down the road. Remember - you're doing what's best for YOU!