

How It Feels to Be a College Athlete

By: Katie Grace Olinger

College athletes don't realize how lucky they are. They get tutors. They get clothes. They get gear. They get more free stuff than most get in a lifetime. How could they ever complain?

These are the comments I get nearly every time I tell someone I play softball at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, but boy are they wrong. Regular students cannot possibly imagine the other side of the sport where my free clothes are soaked from blood sweat and tears or I'm sprinting to my tutor room after spending an hour in the pool, two hours in the weight room and three hours on the softball field.

Don't get me wrong, I love my sport, and I am blessed to play for UNC-CH, but you cannot understand the amount of time and energy I have to put in every day until you are in my shoes.

The other side of the comments are the ones I overhear: Why does she never come to the meetings? Why is she not involved in any clubs? Why does she never do the readings? Why is she falling asleep in class? Did she even have to apply to get into school here?

Little do you know, I have a few comments to make as well.

It irks me when I have to listen to the guy in front of me in Math 110 explain to me that I have no idea how tired he is from getting up for his 8 a.m. I am sure your 7:45 a.m. wake-up call was grueling, but I was up almost two hours prior to that running my gasser test and pushing sleds in the weight room. While you're picking up your Starbucks, I am picking up a 235-pound trap bar.

I also love my constant GroupMe notifications from my Drama 116 group asking me when I am going to get my portion of the project done or whether I will be able to make the meeting time. They get frustrated when I fail to respond in a timely manner; they even go as far to complain to the teacher and compromise my grade for not being a team player. How ironic! What they fail to realize is I don't get out of practice until 7 p.m. so that 6:30 p.m. meeting time isn't going to work for me unless I find a clone. This isn't high school anymore. I don't get to make my own schedule. My sport is my job.

I fall asleep in class because I get an average of five hours of sleep a night. Some might say, "Go to bed earlier." Well if that was an option, I would choose it, but I am getting tutored until 10 p.m. and bending over backwards trying to do the reading and finish that Drama 116 project.

Lastly, yes, I had to apply to get into school here, and to set the record straight, I graduated from my high school in the top five percent just as many other athletes did. Athletes still have to meet standards to receive admission even though they may be a bit compromised. But while you might be a genius, we are pretty damn smart and outstanding at our sport.