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## Are Sports Beneficial For College Students?

Sports are one of America's favorite pastimes—millions of people are either watching or playing a sport every day, especially in college. College sports bring together individuals who have a common interest in the game. While sports are an enjoyable activity, there is, however, an ongoing debate as to whether college sports are beneficial or harmful for students. Sports display a plentitude of benefits for both fans and players for a variety of reasons. Sporting events are a way to bond with peers and to be socially engaged. Attending every game possible is not necessary, but by going to at least some of them it keeps students involved in campus life which surpasses sitting in a dorm room all day watching TV, eating, and sleeping where nothing is accomplished. Going to campus events is the perfect opportunity to meet peers, life-long friends, faculty, and maybe even future colleagues. Furthermore, students may discover something new that interests them or sparks an idea regarding their career path by attending these games. On another note, playing sports keeps students both physically and mentally healthy. Scientifically, playing sports is a form of exercise and therefore it “increases blood flow to the brain and helps the body build more connections between nerves, leading to increased concentration, enhanced memory, stimulated creativity, and better-developed problem-solving skills” (Ianis, 2015). There is a positive effect that sports have on the brain, making it stronger because blood flows and more oxygen is released to the brain.

Subsequently, this keeps individuals from “zoning out in class or while doing your homework,” it “improves your scores on tests,” and “it helps you sleep better” (Brennan, 2018). Sports also release stress and produce endorphins, which essentially make people “happy” (Ianis, 2015). This means that students' energy is boosted, and they are more alert. Furthermore, exercise strengthens the lungs, heart, muscles, bones, reflexes, and coordination (Brennan, 2018). By working the body, students can avoid diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure, and they can focus better in school. Sports also teach students life lessons. Based on personal experience, I can attest to this. As someone who has played sports since first grade, I have discovered that there is more to sports than just the game. It is about being exposed to and adapting to a teamwork-focused environment while having both group and personal goals. It is about staying focused, being self-motivated, organized, prepared, and staying persistent in the face of adversity—all traits that are important for the rest of life. It is about being okay with failure but growing and learning from our mistakes through self-correcting and constructive criticism. Furthermore, although sports demand hard-work, a large portion of time, and dedication, student-athletes have multiple opportunities to seek assistance from tutors and professors to assure they stay on track academically. Campuses have numerous other resources to help students balance their sports and school life. By taking advantage of these resources and by effectively communicating and staying organized, students can be stress-free. In addition, I find that I am more focused and accomplish more tasks when I am busy as compared to when I have too much free-time.

Furthermore, student-athletes may receive scholarships which can help pay for college. In an article *The value of college sports*, it is stated that “more than 150,000 college athletes receive \$2.9 billion in athletic scholarships each year from NCAA member colleges and universities” (Dthomas, 2017). That is a copious amount of money given to these student-athletes to help them pursue their degrees while playing on a sports team. Some students may not be

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outstandingly book smart, so playing a school sport would allow for these students to earn money through hard work and skill outside of the classroom. The skills learned on the field, however, can also be applied to a classroom setting and really in any situation. Although multiple skills are learned through sports, some people will say that college sports are harmful to students. If students focus too much on the sport they are playing, it is easy to fall behind in school work and it is sometimes difficult to catch up. Many times, student-athletes are awake for long hours because of practices, games, club duties, and homework. Being that busy every day can create problems. They may not be able to focus on school as much, they may have a lack of sleep. Thus, they may be more susceptible to injury and they may not be as mentally or physically healthy as they could be. Similarly, students who do not play sports but watch them may also have problems like those of a student-athlete. In an article *How Big Time Sports Ate College Life*, author Laura Pappano argues that “college sports doesn’t just demand more and more money; it is demanding more attention from fans” (Pappano, 419). Many big-time sporting events require people to pay to watch the game, but for many on-campus students, they can watch games for free; and while attending too many sporting events may distract students from their academic goals, sports themselves really are not a huge problem. The problem is that students consciously decide to watch games too frequently, putting them above their academics. It is the responsibility for students to manage their time efficiently—finishing their homework on time but also watching sports they are passionate about and to support peers and friends. A sports culture in university life unifies the student and faculty body. It brings a sense of closeness to the community and passion and pride towards the school’s sports.

There is a fine line between supporting the sports culture of a university and going to so many games that sports become your main focus rather than school; at that point, students might as well have a career in sports. Pappano also found that Glen R. Waddell at the University of Oregon conducted a study to see how much college sports are demanding more attention from fans. He concluded that when “your football team does well, grades suffer. For every three games won, grade-point average lowered by a small amount for males and not at all for females.” Another study showed that “when the Ducks football team was successful, students slacked off more by studying less, consuming more alcohol, and partying more” (Pappano, 419). While this may be true, sports are not the direct causation of students slacking off. Students can attend any other social event or be a part of multiple clubs and organizations and still party, slack off, and drink alcohol. Some students already engaged in those activities prior to attending college. If anything, sports bring people together. They distract students from engaging in that type of activity, and they benefit individuals’ overall health. Furthermore, big time sports create for very passionate fans who will go a long way to watch these games in person, as far as camping out for days as Pappano argues. But some of these games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and most students only miss a couple of classes for these games making it fairly easy to make-up the work. In Pappano’s essay, there is even a picture depicting students holding their spots for tickets but squeezing time in to study. So, although these students are camping out days before the game, they still find the time to finish their school work and study for exams.

By managing their time well and minimizing their procrastination, students can multi-task and find time around the sporting event to focus on their academics. Sometimes it is difficult to always put academics before everything else; students tend to get side-tracked or too lazy. When students have very challenging classes and receive a few bad grades on assignments, it can be stressful and overwhelming. Students should, however, accept the failure and disappointment and understand that they are not always going to get what they want—it takes

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hard work and dedication. Even just playing or watching a couple soccer games it gives students an outlet to forget about the pressure and stresses of school for some time. Although sports may take away time from school and other tasks, they are still beneficial in peoples' daily life just as sports culture will always be a part of campus life. People can learn a lot just by watching the game or playing on a team, such as life skills and health. The important thing is that students understand how to balance their time, so they can study but also be a part of campus life.

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