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## Cheerleading As A Team Sport

Cheerleading is a team sport that ranges from intense conditioning to cheering on sports teams and competing against other teams. A cheerleading routine is two and a half minutes with music. A cheerleading routine consists of tumbling, stunts, jumps, a cheer, a pyramid, and a dance. In October, a recent study showed that cheerleading is considered the most dangerous sport for females. Females participating in cheerleading later on in life can develop long-term medical conditions. Cheerleading is the most dangerous due to its high risk for concussions and many other injuries. Cheerleading is a very intense sport. To be a cheerleader, require strength, stamina, timing, and balance. Cheerleading is considered to be one of the hardest sports. To be the best you can be, you need to dedicate your time and effort to improve your skills. When I was a cheerleader I set a goal every day at practice and would push myself to accomplish new skills.

School cheerleading and competitive cheer are very different. High School cheerleaders cheer for a sport. High school cheerleaders cheer for football and basketball players at games. Competitive cheerleaders don't cheer for any sports teams, instead, they do a competitive cheer in their routine while competing. When you're a competitive cheerleader you associated with a gym and usually practice every day each week. Some High school cheer teams compete at Nationals but not all of them. High school teams only compete if they get a bid to nationals and quality to go. Competitive cheerleaders compete at many competitions and it's very competitive.

In middle school, I was on the school cheer team in 7th and 8th grade. I started going to LI cheer for tumbling classes in 7th grade. That year I mastered many tumbling skills and learned so many techniques. I kept getting better and better. I decided I wanted to join LI cheer all-stars and try out starting in 8th grade. I was very busy every week balancing school cheer and all-star cheer and on top of that school work. Starting freshman year of high school I tried out for the varsity cheer team. I made the team and also was an all-star cheerleader at LI cheer still. It was very hard managing both each week, but I managed to do it. When I was on the Varsity cheer team we cheered at football and basketball games. We practiced every day after school in the gymnasium. At practice, we would stretch first, and warm up our tumbling. Then, we would usually work on stunts, and run through our routine till it's perfect. If a stunt falls, you would have to do one hundred pushups and sit-ups. We strived to get better every day. In the winter starts competitive cheer with my school cheer team. We went to Nationals in Florida every year of High school. We got a bid every year that I was in High School. Nationals is very competitive, many teams are insanely good. To do a perfect routine, you have to be sharp and on time with your teammates. In my junior year of High school, we placed 3rd in the nation at Nationals. I will never forget my teammates and me all crying because of how happy we were. I will never forget that moment. My team was like my family too. All the work we put in paid off in the end. That year of high school my back was very bad. The practice was very hard for me sometimes pushing through all the pain I was in. I also got tendinitis in my right wrist that year. I loved cheering with all of my friends even though many injuries came along with cheering. It gave me many new friendships with new people that I'm grateful I met. I learned so much from those years doing school cheer overall from my coach, and my teammates helping each other. Unfortunately, I had to quit cheer senior year. I later found out I had scoliosis. I was very upset, but I was better off taking a break. Senior year I had much more free time but I missed being on

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the cheer team a lot. I missed seeing my friends every day at practice. Even though sometimes I dreaded going to practice, I missed going every day a senior year. Overall, I'm glad I joined the cheer time in high school, and I'll never forget the memories I made.

I joined LI cheer all-stars in eighth grade in middle school. I was an all-star till 10th grade. I loved being an all-star cheerleader and looked forward to going to practice every day. I met girls/guys from so many towns. It was nice meeting all the new people. We competed at all different places. We went to Florida, Myrtle Beach, Wild Wood NJ, and so many more places. It's such a fun experience competing everywhere and exploring new places. My team was my second family. I'll never forget all the memories I made and all the people I met. To this day, I still talk to many of my old teammates. I dedicated my life to cheerleading and my parents spent a lot of money for me to be an all-star. We practiced every day week, for at least 3-4 hours a day. After experiencing both school and all-star cheer, all-star cheerleading is definitely more intense and harder. Even if you need a water break, you can't till the routine is perfect. If you drop a stunt in the routine or fall in you're tumbling you would have to run 50 laps and do pushups. We would work out every day, I was so sore some days. There would be times where I was so exhausted and sore but still had to go to practice. There were no excuses. Being an all-star comes with many tears and injuries. You need to be strong to be a cheerleader. You can never give up, you just have to keep going. At L.I. cheer if you said you "can't" do something, you would have to do 200 sit-ups. In other sports, there are people to take your spot if you get hurt, but in cheerleading, there isn't. You just have to keep going and pull it together. People don't realize how hard cheerleading is. I miss competing and miss seeing those people every day.

There are many stereotypes of cheerleading. Many people believe that cheerleading isn't a sport. People have no right to say it isn't a sport. Cheerleading is one of the hardest sports. It's a very difficult and dangerous sport, and many people don't realize it. No one understands cheerleading to the extent till they experience a day of it, and see how hard it is. Every skill in cheerleading requires strength, cheerleaders work out every day at practice. Many people think that all cheerleaders are required to do is "cheer". This is a very untrue statement. Cheerleaders work hard to get where they end up, they dedicate every day to get better. They work through all the injuries. Cheerleaders do much more than just "cheering". Also, many people believe cheerleading is "easy". Cheerleading is far from easy. Cheerleaders lift flyers in the air, work out every week, get injuries but have to keep going. Cheerleaders are the strongest females. The risk of getting hurt in cheerleading is very high. If your sick or don't feel good, you still have to go to practice. There's no one to replace them, like other sports. People don't realize how hard it is, to do what cheerleaders do.

Overall, the cheerleader is a very hard and dangerous sport. Many people believe that it isn't a sport, but they never experienced what cheerleaders actually do each practice. It requires strength to be a strong cheerleader. You have to push through all the pain, and keep going. Cheerleaders can develop long-term medical conditions due to their high risk for injuries. Your teammates are like your second family. You have to dedicate your time and effort every day to practice. I miss cheering every day but I'm glad I had the chance to look back on those moments in my life. I'm so happy I decided to start cheerleading, I'll never forget the experience and everything I learned.