

A College Athlete's Pandemic

The past eleven months have been like no others. The toughest part about living through the Covid-19 pandemic is adapting to change. As a college athlete the change started off with a heartbreak. During the first week of March my team and I went on our spring break trip where we won our first four games. The season was off to an amazing start as we were being recognized for dominating teams we were predicted to lose to. The week was filled with true happiness and every single member of the team felt it. On our way back to campus we were preparing for the next game knowing we were going to continue our success through the rest of the season. Unfortunately, as soon as we got back to campus change started to occur. There were colleges canceling their spring breaks and shutting down for the semester. No one knew what to believe until we got word that our campus was giving us three days to get home, settle down, and prepare for all online classes. With that being said, our season was cut short. The team was heartbroken especially because we knew our potential for the remainder of the season. Dominating our first four games and being recognized for it made us ask ourselves, "what would we have accomplished if the season went on?" We learned quickly that there is no time to stay stuck in the past.

My teammates and I shifted our mindset and started asking ourselves, "what is next?" We started to recognize the fact that we have one full year to prepare ourselves for our first game in the spring of 2021. With that being said we only have until October to prepare for our first fall scrimmage. The clock started ticking as soon as the last game ended so we knew it was time to work. The question was, "how?" Personally, my town was a ghost town. There was limited access to fields and there was no possibility of people practicing together due to everyone being told to quarantine. It turns out the most practice I was going to get was in my backyard with

limited equipment. As hard as it was practicing alone every day, it kept me busy since I was unemployed due to the pandemic. I was actually practicing more than I would have on my own if it was a regular summer break. My teammates and I kept each other motivated and held each other accountable for working hard on our own. During the start of the Covid-19 pandemic my teammates and I were able to keep each other positive which was very hard to do during a time like this.

At the end of August we learned there would be no fall scrimmages which was devastating, but understandable due to how bad the pandemic had become. The good news was we were able to go back to campus and start practicing in three different groups. Although we were advised to stay on campus and family was not allowed to visit, my team and I were beyond happy to be there. Once practices started there was not one complaint or negative comment. We were on the field playing the sport we love which is all we asked for when our previous season was canceled. It was odd at first since there were only about ten people per group and we were only able to play socially distanced, but once the school started testing us for Covid-19 frequently, the groups were bigger and contact could be made as long as we were wearing masks. Getting back to somewhat of a normal practice almost had my teammates and I as happy as we were during the week of our four games. As our fall practices ended and winter break approached we started thinking about our season and if it were to actually happen or not. To be completely honest there were a lot of doubts because the pandemic had not changed very much but we all knew we had to keep thinking positively.

Winter break was better than the previous summer break. There was field accessibility and sports clinics with certain restrictions of course. Currently, it is February and we have one month until our first game. The team and I have been practicing for a little more than a week in

three different groups. We are supposed to be in two groups by now, but there have been active cases on campus keeping us from moving forward. Our college would rather be safe than sorry and we cannot blame them for that. We recently got word that the season is on for 2021, but until it is game day we will all have a tiny bit of doubt. We will continue to work as hard as possible, but there is a lot of work we need to do on our own time outside of practice due to our practice restrictions. For example, we can only practice for one hour a day rather than our regular two hours. Practice is definitely not the same as it was last year during this time, but as long as we try our hardest to become the best possible team we can be, we will see success. The past eleven months have created a tremendous amount of change for college athletes, but my team and I were able to adapt to the changes thus far with a positive attitude and will continue to do so in order to continue playing the sport we love.