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Scholars and Athletes

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The student-athletes who play on the 19 teams that compete in the NCAA Division III are a microcosm of the McMinnville Campus. They are from varied backgrounds and locations around the country. They major in a variety of subjects and are active members of campus. A sampling of these students are: back row from left to right, Eric Lawson ’16, baseball, marketing and psychology double major from Mill Creek, Wash.; Tom Knecht ’16, football, management major from Lake Oswego; Jordan Clark ’18, basketball, biology major from Brentwood, Calif.; front row: Kaelia Neal ’18, cross country/track and field, mass communication major from Salem; Anne Ferguson ’19, soccer, education major from Edmonds, Wash.; Maggie Harlow ’16, golf, elementary education major from Monmouth.
Scholars and athletes

Lever, Helser, Durham, Wilson and Rutschman are legendary names in Linfield’s athletic history. They helped lay the foundation for the college’s reputation on the regional and national level.

But the story of Linfield’s student-athletes goes deeper than conference and national titles, school records or numbers on a scoreboard. It’s about academics and education and a deep, pure love of the game. It’s about building confidence, learning balance, establishing relationships – lessons that carry over long after graduation and that final season. It’s about family – the rich history, tradition and culture on the court and off.

Scott Carnahan ’73, athletic director and head baseball coach, is a product of that tradition. He was at Linfield one semester when his father was critically injured in a logging accident and he had to leave school. Teammates and coaches alike reached out to offer assistance, encouragement and support. He spent a year and a half at Centralia Community College. It was the ties he established at Linfield that brought him back to complete his degree and to play football and baseball for Ad Rutschman ’54.

The bonds formed have remained and he counts many of those teammates among his closest friends today.

“We are sometimes like second parents,” he said of his role now. “I’ve had students come to me with really difficult family problems. They know everyone on the entire coaching staff is available. The best example of that is when Parker Moore ’17 was killed.

Anne Ferguson

Anne Ferguson ’19, at the beginning of her Linfield experience, hopes to be a middle school social studies teacher. She enrolled because of Linfield’s academic reputation, and playing soccer was the bonus. She’s learned many lessons her first semester including time management, flexibility, keeping up with homework and communicating with her professors.

“Communication with my professors is crucial, especially because I am a student-athlete,” she said. “That’s one of the top things I like about Linfield. Faculty are flexible about working with me if I miss class.”

She’s also appreciated the exposure to new people and ideas. “Here there are international students and students from places I’m not familiar with. Having open conversations and being accepting of new ideas is really important,” she said.
“What shapes our athletics program is a coaching staff that really believes they are helping educate the whole student, so they focus on team development, character development and enjoying the sport.”

– Susan Hopp
Vice President of Student Affairs

It wasn’t just how the football staff came together, but it was everyone in our department and on campus. That was unique and that was family.

Unique experience

The NCAA is divided into three divisions with Linfield competing in Division III. Students at this level have a fundamentally different approach when it comes to college and to athletics, said Susan Hopp, vice president of student affairs and dean of students, who oversees the athletic department.

Athletic scholarships are not awarded at the DIII level. Players are students first, athletes second. There are no special residence halls, training facilities or separate academic support services for athletes at Linfield.

“What shapes our athletics program is a coaching staff that really believes they are helping educate the whole student, so they focus on team development, character development and enjoying the sport,” Hopp said.

Student-athletes here want a rigorous academic experience. They run the gamut in majors ranging from nursing, biology, physics and math to studio art, business, psychology and economics and everything in between.

“I’ve worked at institutions at every level of the NCAA. In DIII students can have it all – they can be a 4.0 student, they can be an athlete, they can be in music and plays,” Hopp said. “They are not consumed by the identity of being an athlete only. Here students play because they love to play. It brings out the best in them. It helps them have a balanced college experience.”

But while Linfield students play for the love of the game, they also are highly competitive. They want to win at the conference, regional and national level.

“Here they expect to win,” said Professor Eric Schuck, a former athlete at Pacific Lutheran University. “While other DIII programs seem indifferent to success, here they want to succeed. That’s the biggest difference.”

Statistics bear that out (see page 11), considering the number of conference,

Kaelia Neal

Kaelia Neal ’18 dreams of being a sports journalist. She’s getting hands-on experience as sports editor of the Linfield Review, while also working in student accounts and participating in the Black Student Union. This fall, she became the first female Wildcat since 2009 to qualify for the national cross country championships. She credits coaches Greg Mitchell ’95 and Travis Olson ’98 with encouraging her to set her goals higher and giving her the confidence to succeed.

Even as she was having the best running season of her life, she was also taking one of the most challenging classes of her academic career. Information Gathering is known as the toughest and most time-consuming course in the mass communication major. The final project is a massive research paper (her topic was on concussions) and it was coming due at the same time Neal was competing at the regional and national level. The support of her professors, who told her they wanted her to be successful in cross country and in the classroom, was crucial in helping her complete her paper, as well as exceed her expectations on the cross country course to finish in the top 80.

“I was so grateful that they understood what I was dealing with and that they were so supportive,” she said.

“My research skills are much stronger from that class and I’ve developed as a writer. I’m learning how to juggle everything and I’m learning to believe in myself.”
“Playing softball enriched my life and I think it contributed to my success in the classroom, but I also think that it contributed to my success more broadly in terms of teamwork and other life skills that sports offers.”

– Denise (Jeskey) Farag ’88
Assistant Professor of Business
“Playing softball enriched my life and I think it contributed to my success in the classroom, but I also think that it contributed to my success more broadly in terms of teamwork and other life skills that sports offers,” she said.

“Back in the day when I was a student-athlete, a lot of our coaches were also teaching in the classroom,” she said. “There is less of that now and sometimes there can be a disconnect between the coaches and their experiences with the athletes and what’s going on in the classroom. This is designed to see if we can bridge that gap a little.”

Student-Athlete Advisory Committee

Katherine Brackmann, assistant director of external relations/senior woman administrator, organized the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) a few years ago to encourage communication between student-athletes and athletic administration and encourage campus engagement and community outreach. Each sport has two representatives and it gives student-athletes a voice to express needs and concerns.

Students have been involved in numerous volunteer efforts including Special Olympics, volunteering at Sue Buel Elementary School and raising money for breast cancer awareness and the Parker Moore Scholarship. This year, in order to provide support to each other, they established buddy teams. For example, the volleyball team is paired up with the swim team and each attends the other’s competitions to offer support.

Brackmann’s next phase is to organize leadership development opportunities that might include a captains’ training or retreat and to send students to the NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forum.

Jordan Clark

Jordan Clark ’18 plans to put his biology degree to work as a pediatrician. The center on the Linfield basketball team, he spent many of his summers working with children at basketball camps or at vacation Bible school and enjoys having an impact on their lives.

He’s already having an impact on younger students in his role of resident advisor (RA).

“My RA had a great influence on me and showed me what it was like to be a college athlete and an RA,” he said. “He helped me through my transition my first semester. I want to help the freshmen this year and let them know they have friends and support groups to rely on.”

Athletics has taught him how to handle adversity, create balance in his life and develop strong relationships.

“I like that I can balance a hard course load with having some fun, and being an athlete and an RA,” he said. “I want to be able to take these skills into my life because I know life is going to be rough sometimes and I don’t ever want to give up.”

The relationships he’s developed with faculty, coaches, teammates and friends are the most important part of his education.

“I know I can ask them any questions and they’ll always help out,” he added. “I want to make sure I build strong relationships with everything that I do in my life because that’s the key to success.”
Back to family

Lisa Macy-Baker joined the athletics department three years ago as head women’s tennis coach and NCAA compliance officer and is well aware of the contrast between student-athletes at DIII and DI. She attended Oregon State University on a full-ride basketball scholarship and played for one year. She ultimately gave up basketball to find a better balance, which allowed her to study abroad and explore other avenues in her academic life. Ultimately, she said, she got a richer academic experience than she would have received as a DI athlete.

She said Linfield student-athletes get the ultimate experience because they have balance. A Linfield athlete can maximize college opportunities more so than at a higher division.

“That’s not to say that our student-athletes don’t put in a lot of time on the practice field, but I think the commitment to academics and to not missing class time provides a better balance,” she said. “We encourage our students to study abroad. I know how rich an experience that is and every student should do it if they have the opportunity.”

Linfield creates a family environment and that’s what makes the experience stand out.

“When you have such a rich history and tradition, it breeds that connection with family,” she said. “I think our coaches preach that and we really emphasize what is happening off the court.”

– Mardi Mileham

Linfield College athletic record book

CoSIDA ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS 15

ALL-AMERICANS 150 = 87 MEN, 63 WOMEN

Football 47
Softball 29
Women’s Track and Field 20
Baseball 15
Men’s Track and Field 15
Volleyball 6
Men’s Soccer 6
Women’s Swimming 3
Men’s Golf 2
Women’s Soccer 2
Men’s Swimming 2
Women’s Cross Country 2
Women’s Tennis 1

NCAA TEAM TITLES

Softball 2
Football 1
Baseball 1

NCAA INDIVIDUAL TITLES

Women’s Track 5
Men’s Track 2

NWC TITLES 56 = 31 MEN, 25 WOMEN

Football 12
Softball 11
Baseball 8
Women’s Tennis 8
Women’s Golf 4
Men’s Golf 4
Men’s Basketball 2

Men’s Soccer 2
Volleyball 2
Men’s Tennis 2
Men’s Swimming 1

TOP 25 NATIONAL FINISHES

Football 9
Softball 5
Baseball 3
Men’s golf 2
Men’s track 2
Women’s golf 1
Men’s soccer 1

Records are since 1998, beginning of NCAA Division III

For a complete list, go to linfield.edu/linfield-news/records/