

The (Unconventional) Student-Athlete

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Most people join sports for opportunities, friendships, or fun. They want to make their mark on history, especially for their school. They want to learn the value of teamwork and hard work. These are not the reasons why I participate in sports.

I am a three sport athlete. I have participated in Sporter Air-Riflery, Precision Air-Riflery, and Archery since my freshman year of high school. These are not conventional sports by any means because they are more individualistic rather than team-oriented, do not directly require vigorous cardiovascular training, and do not have to involve any interactions between teams. I am not your conventional athlete. I do not have huddles with my teammates for pep talks or run miles for training. I do talk to other teams during matches, but not necessarily about the sport.

However, I do know what it means to be a student athlete. It requires time management: taking some time away from studying to improve other aspects of our bodies. It calls for us to become the best versions of ourselves: realizing we don't have to be the best to be our best, and therefore coming to terms with the fact that our greatest opponent is ourselves. It demands looking on the bright side of situations, like beating an undefeated team, but also preparing for the worst. Learning these lessons has helped me mature into the person I am today, and being a student-athlete has prepared me better for my future than if I hadn't done any sports during high school.

Shooting sports have also taught me specific valuable skills that I plan to use even after my athletic career. Unlike conventional sports, shooting sports require their athletes to move as little as possible. Even when our hearts are racing, pumping blood and adrenaline throughout our body, we cannot allow ourselves to move even a centimeter because we would allow our shots to fall. This has taught me control. Every match requires us to shoot record shots, which means we have to shoot one shot per target. Before matches, however, my coach tells my team and me that we are not shooting many targets one at a time, but rather one target many times. Through this train of thought, we are compelled to go through the same motions each and every individual shot. This has taught me consistency. As previously stated, shooting is a very precise sport, as any movement or distraction can turn a perfect bullseye into a zero. The only thing that is permitted to come between me and my target is a pellet. This has taught me focus.

So, no. I do not participate in sports to have opportunities, friendships, or fun. Those are just added bonuses. I continue to shoot for my teams because I want to continue training to control my mind and body, remain consistent in various aspects of my life, and focus on what is important so that I can achieve great things right now and in the future.