

Coaches emphasize schoolbooks over playbooks



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According to Caine, the University has a high rate of graduation among athletes, and the degree is a form of repayment for representing the University. He also feels that a degree is the future of the athlete.

"The athletic experience may be the most important thing to the athlete when he first comes here, but he later places that in perspective," says Caine.

Head football coach Rich Brooks believes in emphasizing academics both in recruiting and in actual implementation.

"We have a required study hall for the first-term freshmen and for those that are on academic warning or probation," says Brooks. During the monitored study hall, athletes learn good study habits.

According to Brooks, the only time that the athlete is taken out of the classroom is during the football season, and at all other times academic appointments overrule athletic responsibilities. "Sometimes they miss practices in the spring to take courses that they couldn't get otherwise," he says.

Each assistant coach meets once a week with each of the assigned group of players to discuss their academic progress. Brooks thinks the athletes are given adequate help and feels responsible in seeing they all leave school with a degree.

"I will do everything in my power to let them leave here with a degree," says the head coach. "It does no good to be a good football player if you don't get an education."

Brooks realizes that playing football and trying to carry a full schedule of classes is time consuming, but it doesn't excuse poor grades. "During fall quarter they are either practicing, studying or are in class, but that is one of the sacrifices of being a football player," he says.

Brooks notes that players get better grades during the season of competition. He believes this is due to the severe budgeting of time that the athletes must make. He does admit, however, that during winter quarter (after the

season) the players tend to relax their studying habits.

"We still meet academically once a week though," he says.

Radcliff, who says he enjoys going to class, hopes to graduate in June with a degree in Recreation and Park Management. If his football career concludes this year, he hopes to pursue a career in his major. "I hope to get a job in Eugene in the Recreation Department, or go back to Columbus, Ohio, and see if I can get a job there," he says.

According to Radcliff most of the team realizes that academics must come before athletics. "Most of the football players have a major, because if you don't go pro, what can you do?" he states.

Junior Pat McDougall is concentrating his efforts toward a degree in sociology. "I plan to be a high school-type counselor when I graduate," he says.

For McDougall, academics wasn't always his major concern, but two years in college changed that. "Academics means a lot more to me now than when I came, because I realized that I can't play football forever," he says.

Sophomore Scott Setterlund, who was defensive player-of-the-week against California, takes his homework on the road trips, but still finds that studies are overwhelming during football season. "If you play a sport like football or basketball you have to be dedicated to that first. That's hard for the athlete that wants to do the homework for his future," he says.

Sophomore Mike Nolan realizes that schooling is very important. Although he is considering coaching if he can't play, Nolan still realizes the need for a degree. "I'd like to play or coach in football, but if not, I will go into business in some way," he says.

Freshman Dwight Robertson was very impressed with the emphasis Brooks, as a recruiter, placed on academics. "A lot of the other schools only talked about football, but Brooks talked about my education also, and that had a lot to do with my coming here," he says.

Though not as maligned as football players, basketball players are also often accused of being non-academic. According to head coach Jim Haney, this is usually a false accusation. Haney meets with each player regarding his academic progress and guest speakers discuss different professions.

"I don't buy it when someone says that you can't be a good student and a good athlete," says the former University of Pennsylvania player. Haney, who holds a degree in chemical engineering from that school, emphasizes good schoolwork — but agrees that the players must be self-motivated. "Placing myself in charge of academics makes them aware of how important it is."

Sophomore Mike Clark is aware of the importance of academics. "At other schools they just put the emphasis on playing, but here academics does come over basketball," says Clark.

"The coaches are really putting special interest in what we do and what we take. I think it's great that they're taking an interest in my graduating in three more years," he says.

Clark devotes time to studying in hopes of getting a good degree.

keep the proper perspective because in four years where am I going to be?"

Sophomore Rich Davis has not yet declared a major, but is taking a wide variety of courses in search of one. "You can't play basketball all of your life — that's why you've got to get a degree or at least learn something," he says.

Davis says the coaches are constantly reminding the players that the studies come first. "They tell us they are preparing us for the next 40 years," he says.

Davis feels that it is important to be happy and he doesn't want to get stuck in a job he hates. "I want to find something challenging — it doesn't really matter what it is if it helps make me a better person," he says.

Sophomore Stu Lyon has goals that he knows will make him a better person. "I want to be an over-achiever academically and athletically," he says. He believes that there is more to life than playing basketball and making money.

"In school my goals are to make myself a broader personality and to make myself more literate."

He feels that once an athlete "gets his head out of the clouds," and realizes he is not a star, he can begin to evaluate his situation

years," he states.

Haney agrees, and perhaps many of the stereotypes of the "dumb jocks" are perpetuated by those who do not try.

"Stereotypes of any kind are wrong, but in some ways athletes have earned the reputation as well," he says. "Before there is a stereotype there has to be some basis in fact. The athlete has to accept that role and play it, or stand up and say he is different. In some cases he proves he is not just the typical athlete and that he is to be judged as a person for what he is."

Haney also believes that the nature of football and basketball tends to make people glorify and worship the athletes. He thinks that it is easy for an athlete to get carried away by this attention and forget why he is at school — to get an education.

Clark is willing to stand up and proclaim his difference from the stereotypical athlete. "Being a basketball player is a strange situation. People look at me in ways that I don't want them to. I don't consider myself as an athlete off the court, I want people to look at me as Mike Clark the student," he says.

An unobtrusive size makes Nolan an unknown — and he likes it that way. "Nobody really knows who I am, because I'm just another student in class. I don't know how they would react if they knew I was on the football team," he says.

McDougall doesn't appreciate the looks that a football player of his size gets. "People sometimes think we're inconsiderate, above everyone else, or not a good student," he says.

Regardless of stereotypes, athletes are just as diverse a group as the rest of the University, and they must put a lot of effort into their education, according to Haney.

"Anybody, whether he's an athlete or not, is wasting an opportunity in life if he is wasting four years at college," he says. Haney also believes this time wasting will set the tone of a person's future.

College teaches you how to go out and be successful, and to neglect an academic opportunity will

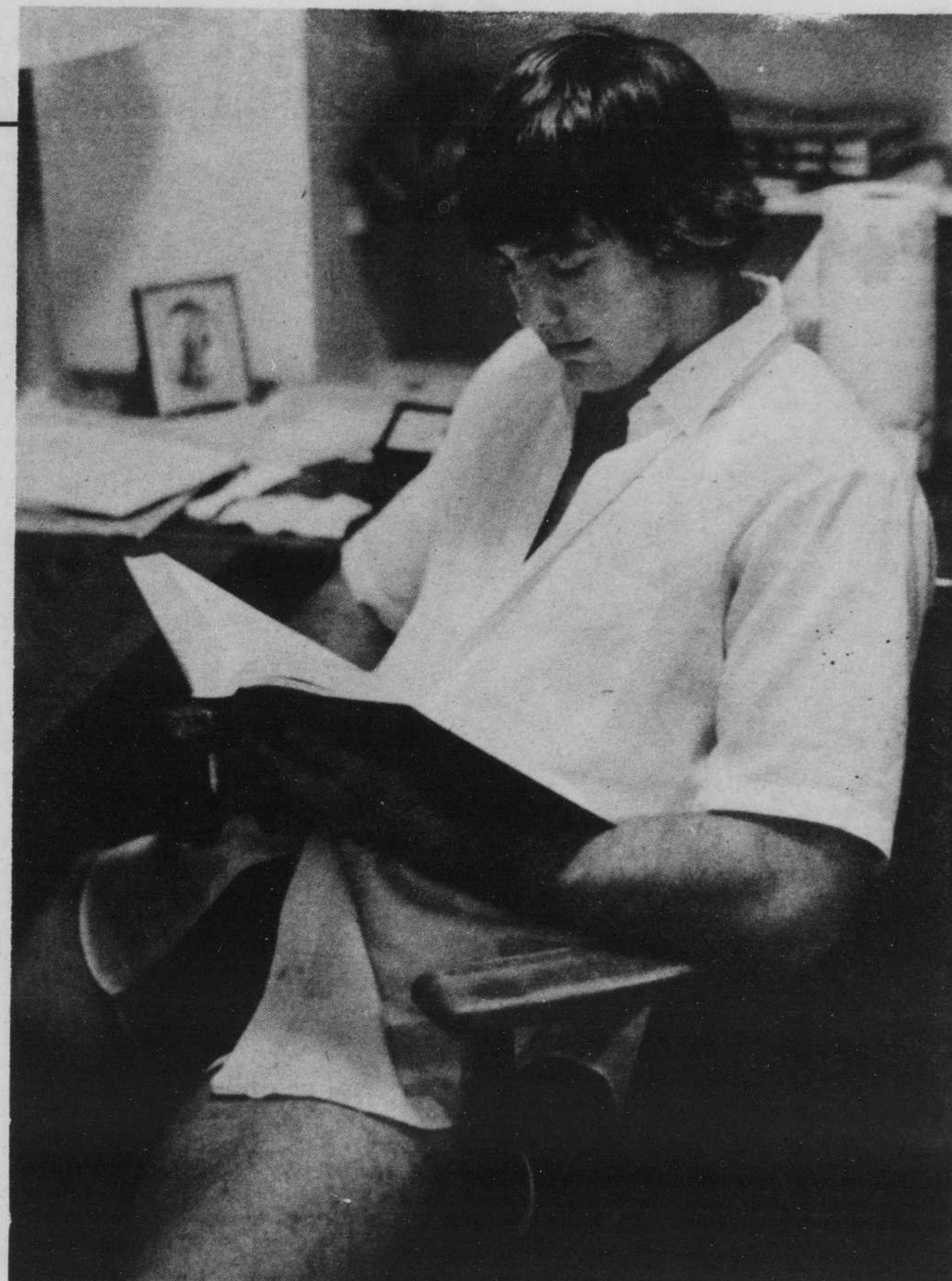


Photo by Ken Sands

Football player Scott Setterlund, who takes homework on roadtrips, finds that studies are often overwhelming during the season. But he perseveres, saying he does his homework for the future. Coaches meet with players once a week to discuss an athlete's academic progress. "I will do everything in my power to let them leave here with a degree," coach Rich Brooks says. "It does no good to be a football player if you don't get an education."

channel a person into a negative setting for the rest of his life," says Haney.

As far as athletes are con-

cerned, Haney believes that coaches must do everything they can to help everyone graduate, and work with dedication on their

education. "It doesn't always happen, but I do the best I can," he says.

Story by Ken Sands.

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