

Athlete draws strength from her spiritual beliefs

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If you asked Denise Haselwood what makes her laugh, the three-sport athlete just might surprise you with her answer.

"Being silly, I love to be silly. Sometimes it's borderline immature because most of my life it's been expected that I'm a responsible person. I'm an athlete who's a good student and all these serious things and some people don't quite know what to do with me when I get really silly," Haselwood said.

Her favorite prank to pull on friends is when they return from a trip and want her to pick them up at the airport. She admits to dressing up in what she calls her makeshift clown outfit.

During spring break an unsuspecting friend returned from Florida. "I showed up in plaid pants, patent leather shoes, a white shirt, a brown shirt with checkers on it, a big, huge black coat, two baseball hats with the bills pointing off each temple of my head, sunglasses, a big red nose and gloves."

Another escapade included kidnaping a friend on her birthday and taking her to breakfast. "We let her put on shoes and a sweatshirt. . .her hair was sticking out everywhere," Haselwood said with a smile.

"I love doing things like that," she says. "Most people don't know the softer side of me because they see me as an athlete."

Those who do know her well know the kindness she shows to others. Haselwood has a close friend who lives in California, "Since I don't get to do things for her like I do for people around here, I send her cards and stuff like that."

Haselwood takes her role as a leader seriously. "I am a good leader, I am compassionate, I'm getting better at listening. I think I listen fairly well but I know I will often interrupt and talk too much at times. I like to have fun and make other people feel good about themselves."

Perhaps most important to her are the lives of the young people she has coached or will coach in the future. "I love to coach kids. I would do anything for a kid if they wanted to be a better athlete."

Haselwood can't stand for remarks from people like, "I can't do that or I'm not good at that. She says her pet peeve is when someone stands in front of a mirror and says, "I'm ugly."

"That frustrates me to death. I have friends who will flinch whenever they say 'I can't do this' because I will punch them."

She admits that she is very nitpickier at times. "I've gotten better about this but a lot of times it's hard for me not to go back and fix something if it's not exactly how I want it. This sometimes causes me to lose patience with people."

When it comes to material things, Haselwood's needs are fairly simple. "I need music or

sound of some kind. I'm good with silence but if (my roommate) is not home, then I like to turn on my Christian radio station and go to sleep to that and wake up to that."

Sound is important to her because it helps relax and to stop her from thinking. It helps tune out what may be bothering her. "It also helps me from trying to fix people's lives. Like, if I knew you had a problem and you were really struggling with it, I would go home and find a way to fix it, whether or not you wanted me to, I would find a way."

Focusing on music helps her realize that the problems of her friends are not her problems to solve. Understanding this was one of life's most difficult lessons she had to grasp last year.

If her home ever caught on fire, the most important items she would save would be pictures and things that reminded her of people and the past. The memories are always in her heart and her mind.

"I love to look at the picture of my friend from California. We met

FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) camp this last summer. There's a picture of us that is totally spontaneous. . .pictures like that can't be replaced. Those kind of pictures are what I would save and forget the rest. I wouldn't care about every certificate or trophy I ever had, I just want my pictures," said Haselwood.

So what does she read? Foremost, she reads her Bible. Her other favorites include historical fiction written by Christian authors. "In the books that I've been reading, the authors have included a lot of historical facts in them. I'll always remember what happened at the Battle of Midway, the Battle of Guadalcanal because I read about some fictional guy in the armed forces. I'll remember those battles because I'll remember the characters from the book."

Her heroes include her sister, Diahn and her high school basketball coach, Brenda Terpstra. During Haselwood's freshman year in high school, Terpstra discovered she had Hodgkin's Disease. Treatment for the disease caused Terpstra to lose all her hair. "She wore wigs for the games and turbans for our practices. All the way through, she continued to coach basketball, continued to be real and she noticed when something got to me. She really pushed me and challenged me to get out of my shell. She did this by the things she said and by the things she did. It was really where she had been, the things she had come through and



the way she looked to God for the answers."

Haselwood speaks just as highly of her sister whom she says is, "honest and bubbly. She goes after what she wants but does it in a way that doesn't run over people. She's very well-liked at school. She's a very, very, talented actor."

"My ideal job would be to work with kids and athletes and talk to them about my faith."

~Denise Haselwood~

Haselwood is a speech major who's strong

spiritual belief is more important than just going to church on Sunday. Although, she knows it takes a lot of time and exposure to make a living as a public speaker; she also knows this is what God has called her to do.

The best times of Haselwood's life, besides the ones she spent growing up in Centralia, are also the last couple of years at CCC.

"I've grown a lot, my faith has gotten stronger, God has really been working in my life. He's been showing me things. Just the decision to come here itself was amazing," said Haselwood.

She had narrowed her offers down to two colleges. One was another community college and the other was George Fox College in McMinnville. Clackamas was not "even in the picture."

Haselwood's tough decision came about after sitting down with Terpstra. They listed out the pros and cons. "We prayed about it for a week and at the end of that week it was like (God said) I want you to go to Clackamas. So I ended up here."

Last June C.W. Post College in Long Island, New York called and wanted her to play softball for them this year. Haselwood thought it was great. In fact, they were offering her \$3,000 more in the original scholarship than they are now. According to Haselwood, "it was like no, God wants me at Clackamas again."

As a consequence, she's been

having a great time. "I would not trade the time I had on the volleyball team this year or the basketball team and right now the softball team for anything," she said.

"It cannot be replaced. The people I have gotten to know and the way they have touched my life and changed me cannot be equaled." Haselwood admits she played sports all her life and rarely experienced sitting on the bench. In volleyball she got a chance to see what it was like.

"I had more fun on that team sitting on the bench and not playing. I played in two matches all season long, I think, in regular season. But, I had more fun cheering those people on because they would tell me that when they were down they would listen for my voice. That was all I needed to keep going and make sure I could build them up and put them back on their feet out there on the court," said Haselwood.

In basketball, she felt she was finally at the point where she always thought she could be. Statistically, she had a good season. "More than that, my team trusted me and they followed me. As a point guard that's what I have to be. My team has to believe in me, trust in me and play for me. I need to be a leader out there. This year, more than any other time in my life that's what it was. It was so amazing how God was able to work that for me."

Softball has been a kind of trial because the team has had so many things going on. Haselwood accepts the fact she's not playing the position of catcher even though this is what position her scholarship offer is for. She says, "it's a little frustrating but at the same time I'm learning a lot through it. God is really working in other parts of my life so it's okay."

So much in fact, that Haselwood is amazed at the opportunities the last two years have given her. "I've had so many things happen to me that made me grow and the fact that I was even in the situation for it to happen shows that I've grown and dealt with it."

Haselwood grew up in Centralia, Wash. Her parents

who have been married for 27 years still reside there with her 17 year old sister. Her mother coached basketball, softball and volleyball at Centralia Community College when Haselwood was "really little."

"I barely remember my grandfather taking me to basketball games. The team's point guard would try and teach me to dribble the basketball between my legs. I've grown up around athletes all my life. My mom and dad played on slow pitch teams so we traveled a lot."

Haselwood credits her parents' supportive nature and encouragement as keys to her success not just as an athlete but as a student. "My dad wasn't a real good student, so when my sister and I would bring home report cards with 4.0 averages, his face would always show his support and encouragement." It turns out Haselwood's father had a vision problem that wasn't discovered until he joined the Air Force.

Haselwood's mother is a junior high teacher and has a Master's Degree in counseling. "I don't think my mom missed one game of any sport the whole time I was in high school," she said.

Currently, her mom and grandparents see every softball game the Cougars play in Washington. They have also made it to almost every Saturday home game. "They've always been there as someone I can turn to for help."

As a young, female athlete, it was never a matter of would she play one of the three sports at which she excels, but rather at which college. After much contemplating, Haselwood has decided on Long Island's C.W. Post College.

At Post her studies will be physical education in a non-school setting with a business minor. This is so "I can get a job managing a sports facility," said Haselwood.

"Or maybe," she says smiling, "I can put on some of my own camps. I love kids and I love athletics and I could not do anything that didn't involve one or the other. My ideal job would be to work with kids and athletes and talk to them about my faith."