

D1 Colleges Offer Opportunities to Athletes

By Reem Hamaida '19 and Nefretari Powell '19

As the year comes to an end, some of Midwood's highest performing student athletes have been given the opportunity to attend a Division One (D1) school.

A D1 school provides scholarships for at least 14 different sports in return for a student's athletic commitment. After selecting the best performing athletes, the college then trains them at a higher level, providing them with the credentials to go professional.

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, there are three divisions in which athletes are categorized in, D1 being the highest. It is the most competitive division as these schools have the largest budgets with the largest amount of students. This leaves room for only the best athletes to be admitted.

As far as D1 football, there is a subcategory of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) or 1A and Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) or 1AA. The difference is that FBS is the top level for a college football player to participate in with schools being able to provide 85 scholarships a year while FCS is under FBS with 63 scholarships to offer. Because FCS schools have fewer scholarships to give, not every athlete is given a full scholarship.

These schools recognize and choose the most outstanding players through scouts. They work for professional sports agencies and attend games to spot any striking contenders on a specific team. If someone stands out, they look at their statistics to see if they are as great and consistent in their previous games.

In addition to athletic performance, students must show academic excellence in order to receive the best offer because scouts look at grades also, Mr. Anthony Odita, the coach of the football team, stressed.

"Getting a scout's attention is extremely hard, let alone getting an offer," assistant coach, Mr. Jonathan Skelly explained.

Because this is true with only a two percent chance of students getting an athletic scholarship, another way to be acknowledged is through highlights. These are videos that are sent to scouts in order to showcase a student's best moments on the field. They can either be created by the players or the coaches and sent to the colleges that they want to be noticed by. Coaches encourage the athletes to make a Twitter account so that students can post their highlights and tag the schools or send them direct messages. This further grabs the scout's attention and increases the player's chance of getting an offer.

Capturing the eyes of these D1 schools were Matthew Thomas '18, Joseph Halasy '18, Dontae McGriff '19 and Tyler Bartholomew '19, who all received full scholarships.

Thomas '18 was the only Hornet to receive an FBS offer, committing to Rutgers University. "Rutgers is not only an athlete's dream school," he said. "It also has a really strong business program that I want to pursue. It's really expensive so going D1 and not have to pay for college was truly a blessing."



Dontae McGriff '19 and Tyler Bartholomew '19 received full scholarships as D1 athletes.

Joseph Halasy '18 also got a D1 offer, but in the FCS category, from University of Albany. He expressed his gratitude, explaining how this opportunity is a stepping stone into going pro. Mr. Odita was extremely pleased with the success of the boys.

"New York is a basketball city," he said. "Yet,

both Matt and Joe gave football a try for the first time freshman year and now they both have full scholarships."

Both McGriff '19 and Bartholomew '19 received an FCS offer from Sacred Heart University. McGriff '19 said, "Receiving a D1 offer is not only an honor. It is a privilege because I come from a place where people don't get out so to be given a chance is very special to me."

Bartholomew '19 described how this opportunity was something he'd hoping for even as a child. He said, "It's been a dream of mine since day one. From my first time playing football at eight years old, I've never lost sight of chasing and achieving that dream. I'm so happy that my parents don't have to pay a single penny for my education due to the fact that I've worked so hard my whole life for this very time and moment."

Because going D1 is so rare, it is considered a major accomplishment. Both the friends and teammates of the athletes were very excited.

Kimonique Parsard '19 said, "Tyler works hard day in and day out. His whole life is football and you certainly see that everytime he steps foot on that field. There's no stopping him."

Autum Adams-Edwards '18 expressed similar feelings toward McGriff '19.

She said, "Dontae is like a brother to me so for him to specifically be recognized by such a great school shows how talented he is."

Elyh Fennell '19 said, "They sleep, eat, and breathe football, and they deserve to have an offer from a D1 college. Seeing them work hard and seeing it pay off makes me happy."

Although Bartholomew '19 and McGriff '19 have received offers, they are just starting their journey. Both students are strong candidates for future offers which will make it difficult in the decision of signing to one school and declining the others.

There is also the risk of a school taking back their offer either for an academic decline, a decrease in athletic performance or even an injury. No offer is certain until signing day which takes place after the student's senior season is over where the student signs a commitment letter to the college or university they will be attending.

Going D1 is the first step toward the National Football League (NFL) and those who've received these offers have proven that they are ready.

Photo Credit: Nefretari Powell '19

Boys Volleyball Spikes Out of Playoffs

By Jasper Li '19

The Boys Varsity Volleyball Team had an impressive season, standing at 9-1 by the end of the Brooklyn A North League. However, they fell out of the city playoffs in their first game against Francis Lewis, losing 1-2.

"After losing the playoff games, I feel like we can do better," said Wen Cheung '20. "Next year, I hope everyone on the team improves in the position they play."

The team's strategy was to breakthrough the opposing team's defense with rapid aggression, but there were more things to the game than just hitting the ball.

Cheung said, "We were faced with the challenges of a lack in communication and giving up too early."

"We had the game in the bag, but we lost our heads after losing a couple of points," said Kyaw Khant '20.

Although getting eliminated in the first round of playoffs brought the team down, the players kept their chins up, focusing on next year's playoffs.

"We could have done a lot better in the playoff game, but I'm not disappointed since there is next year," said Cheung. "We'll be able to win if everyone dedicates themselves."

The current roster is composed of 16 students from various grade levels. Unlike most sports, volleyball teams are allowed to have up to three captains; however, the "main" captain is Frank Troiso '18.

A large part of the team's success throughout the season is the result of their coach, Mr. Tommy Ma, pushing the team to remember the basics, having them do rigorous warm ups more often than the team's previous coaches, and incorporating a new playing style.

"In the beginning of the season, we did a lot of conditioning: burpees, push-ups, and running laps, which were difficult and extremely tiring," said Zain Ali '19. "As the season progressed, most of the players began getting used to it and it didn't seem as hard."

According to Elizabeth Yatsuk '19, one

of the team's managers, "The coach introduced a new style of volleyball transitions that helps cover more ground and provides better attack techniques."

Additionally, the boys played practice matches against each other to see individual strengths and weaknesses, said Luis Gene '19.

Looking into the next season, the team plans to improve their teamwork and mentality, which are two of its current weaknesses.

"The season was solid. We had our ups and downs, but we all pulled through," said Samvel Gazaryan '18.

The team members and staff formed a bond that goes beyond the sport.

"The other players, managers, and Mr. Ma are wonderful and have made this season very memorable," said Ali. "The team is very close, like a family."

Girls Track Dashes Through Championship

By Christina Wu '19

With the end of the outdoor season approaching, the girls track team managed to seize first place at the Selman Meet on Saturday May 12 and second place at Brooklyn Borough Championships on Saturday May 19.

The girls prepped for the meet with extensive training at Wingate field. Coach Harry A. Singer put emphasis on events that are not necessarily focused on by other teams, including the high jump, triple jump, steeplechase, and hurdles. Other coaches rarely put their athletes in these events because it requires time and effort to teach the students the proper form and techniques. Nonetheless, Chase Ware '18 placed third for high jump in varsity.

Ware stated, "Even though we had no place to practice high jump, I placed because jumping comes easily to me."

The lack of proper equipment set the team back because they are restricted from practicing and perfecting their techniques. In most cases, the girls learn to substitute the nonexistent hurdles and sand pits to further prep them for their events.

"On Saturdays, we occasionally have an extra day of practice because there is no sand pit at Wingate," said Annecia Smalls '20. "In order for us, long jumpers, and triple jumpers to have practice we have to travel to Red Hook."

However, the girls learned to overcome this difficulty on May 12, when they surprised

the coaches and themselves by winning the meet. Dayahana Douglas '21 placed first in the 100, as well as the 200, with

a 12.98 in the 100 and a 27.34 in the 200. Adja Thomas '20 won third in shot put with a 24' 1". These outstanding performances, along with many others, allowed the team to gain points and defeat their competitors.

Thomas stated, "To practice for shot put, I rehearsed the drills that my coach taught me at home and at regular practice, I used the shot put provided to work on my form for meets."

As the school year comes to an end, the girls still have to race through the final stretch, City Championships. City qualifiers have one more chance to compete on Sunday May 27 at Icahn Stadium. Those who qualified are Imma Ruiz '19 for the 800, Simiana Carter '18, Ruiz, Mackenzie Evans '18, and Smalls for the 4 by 4 relay, Douglas for the 100, Aysegul Yumusak '20 for race-walk, Thomas for javelin, and Carter, Nayhla Nazon '19, Evans, and Douglas for the 4 by 1 relay.

"I had to do a lot of work on my own and I looked back on my split in order figure out what part of my race I had to improve on," Ruiz states. "With the help of my friends who told my splits, I was able to know how to pace myself to my race. Working out with my relay helped me work on my speed and allowed me to push past my limits."

The girls are even more pumped for City Champs and can't wait to take home the win.



The girls won second place at Brooklyn Borough Championships.

Photo Credit: Ms. Bousi