Athletic Teams Reach Scholarly Milestone

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ATHLETIC TEAMS REACH SCHOLARLY MILESTONE

Being named a scholar-team by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) is noteworthy, especially since athletic team members must maintain a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) during an academic year. Having all varsity teams named scholar-teams: Historic.

In July, the NAIA announced that, during the 2018-19 academic year, Dordt University had all 18 of its varsity teams earn the honor of scholar-teams—the first time in Dordt’s history that all teams have hit the mark.

Ross Douma, Dordt’s athletic director, says coaches worked alongside student-athletes to help them reach their potential by connecting to on-campus resources and tutoring opportunities.

“The academic success of our athletic teams is part of a collective campus effort to help each student have a positive academic experience,” says Douma.

For the second year in a row, the Dordt University women’s basketball team had the highest GPA in NAIA Division II women’s basketball, with a 3.82 GPA. The football team earned the honor for the first time in school history with a 3.23 GPA, which is top among NAIA football teams. The men’s volleyball team also claimed the top NAIA GPA in the nation with a 3.56.

For 10 years, the registrar’s office at Dordt has tracked athlete GPAs and compared them to the student body as a whole.

“Over that 10-year period, when accounting for the differences in GPA between men and women, you can’t tell an athlete from a non-athlete at Dordt by looking at the GPA,” says Jim Bos, Dordt’s registrar. “Our coaching staff recruits students who are a good fit for our institution, and our coaches take academics seriously. It is because everyone is working together and has the success of our student-athletes as their goal that we can celebrate an achievement like this.”

Ebby Prewitt, a senior biology major who plays on the women’s basketball team, says that time management is key when it comes to maintaining balance. She recalls a time when, wired from a biology physiology lab report at 3 a.m. on the day of a basketball game against Jamestown University, she remembers the challenge of time management.

“I try to do my homework in-between classes during the day, and make it a priority to relax with friends and do fun things as well as being committed to my sport and to academics.”

DORDT'S 2018-19 SCHOLAR-TEAMS

**SPORT/GPA/NAIA RANK**

- **Baseball:** 3.25 (9th)
- **Men’s Basketball:** 3.21 (19th)
- **Women’s Basketball:** 3.82 (1st)
- **Dance:** 3.50 (8th)
- **Men’s Cross Country:** 3.50 (8th)
- **Women’s Cross Country:** 3.57 (12th)
- **Football:** 3.23 (1st)
- **Men’s Golf:** 3.36 (21st)
- **Women’s Golf:** 3.63 (15th)
- **Men’s Indoor Track and Field:** 3.40 (3rd)
- **Women’s Indoor Track and Field:** 3.66 (5th)
- **Men’s Outdoor Track and Field:** 3.40 (4th)
- **Women’s Outdoor Track and Field:** 3.66 (4th)
- **Men’s Soccer:** 3.47 (4th)
- **Women’s Soccer:** 3.63 (3rd)
- **Softball:** 3.59 (10th)
- **Men’s Volleyball:** 3.56 (1st)
- **Women’s Volleyball:** 3.61 (16th)
The NAIA scholar-team recognition is the first for the football team in its 11-year history. Joel Penner, Dordt’s head football coach, says the football team intentionally prioritizes academic achievement alongside athletic ability. They partner with the Academic Enrichment Center, an on-campus resource that provides tutoring services and helps students gain the skills they need to succeed academically. The football team also develops “academic game plans”—where players are responsible for weekly planning, accountability, tutoring appointments, and scheduling study sessions. The coaches help the players achieve their goals.

“We believe that no one rises to low expectations, and this is true on the field as it is for other areas of our lives,” says Penner.

Other teams have earned the scholar-team honor repeatedly, including the women’s and men’s cross-country teams, which were honored each year since 2007-08.

“Ultimately, consistency is the key for good distance athletes and, I think, for good students,” says Nate Wolf, Dordt’s cross-country coach. “The character traits we want to recruit are what make excellent students. We make this clear when we recruit student-athletes.”

Prewitt, who hopes to become a physician’s assistant someday, says the hard work she and her teammates put into athletics can and should be translated into working hard in the classroom.

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