

ACCD drops the ball on athlete funds

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Many Palo Alto College athletes who could play at the next level of competition (NCAA Division I, II, III) go unrecognized. Since Palo Alto College is a two-year college, NCAA Division teams don't take the time to scout here.

Palo Alto's sports program has made a huge effort to provide a variety of sports to its students, from men's and women's basketball and volleyball teams, to swimming, tennis, flag football, golf and even a new women's softball team for the students.

"We have a good program, We just need someone to advocate for us (PAC Sports Program); they (college district) just haven't put any money aside, unfortunately, for the athletes," said Carmen Velasquez, Palo Alto's scholarship coordinator.

Velasquez also pointed out that if a student were to receive an athletic scholarship it would be a great honor for such a difficult route.

"It would only help, because not only is the athlete responsible for their studies, but also responsible for their team events (games, practices, etc.), and most of the times it holds that student back from holding a job because they're doing so much," Velasquez said.

Students' grades are also a factor. Depending on the university, the GPA admittance can range from 2.0-3.9. Many athletes tend to have most of their focus on their sport, and it ends up backfiring on them in the long run. A low GPA causes many athletes to miss out on playing at the higher level.

Responsibilities for athletes are more than one would think. Joseph Gallardo, a sophomore Accounting major, and a current player for the men's basketball team, said. "It's an intense experience. My coach

(Ruben Calderon) is a very hard-nosed type of coach, so we have no days off. He pushes us everyday and expects a lot out of us, so we really have to stay on top of what he has going on. All the expectations mixed in with school work and other personal stuff provides for a very tough one [week], every week."

If a student is able to be handle all that is thrown at them as far as their sport, schoolwork, work and other personal affairs, then there has to be a reason why they shouldn't be able to get a scholarship for their talent.

Although most athletes already know there is no athletic scholarship program here at PAC, many athletes have mentioned our program has its benefits.

"It gave me the extra confidence that I needed going into the NCAA-type level," said Jefferson. "PAC got me ready not only physically, but mentally. I not only developed into a better basketball player but all around better person."

More money would equal more opportunities for the team. Not only would nearby schools see the players and the team, but other schools from other cities, as well.

"Palo Alto has one of the best sports program in the Alamo Colleges District, but they never get the credit they deserve, because the lack of exposure," said Jefferson.

Students sign up for extra curricular sports activities for many reasons. Many play for the love for the game and others play to show off their talent in the sport.



Joseph Gallardo defends against the opposing team

Photo by Kathleen Saldivar

"I actually started coming to school because I found out they had a basketball team," said Gallardo. "As an athlete, it has helped me because the sports program here is far superior than the high school competition, and if the day comes where I can move on to a higher level, I can say that Palo Alto definitely helped prepare me for that."

Not only does the sports program benefit current students, it also has benefitted past students as well. Andrew "Drew" Jefferson a former basketball player for the Palomino's, is currently playing for Hannibal La-Grange College in Missouri (Division I)

Palo Alto supports the athletes with equipment, jerseys and an outstanding facility, which includes a newly renovated weight room. However, the Alamo Colleges do not do much to help get their talented athletes into a university.

"We don't have the support of the Board of Trustees and the higher level of administration right now," said John Libby, athletic coordinator of PAC's sports program. Libby explained that the administrators try to eliminate expenses rather than encourage them. Travel to out-of-town games and athletic scholarships are no exception.