



I'm Feeling Lucky

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This year, it has been my job in this space to bring you articles that directly engaged prominent issues in the sports world. This column has discussed myriad issues and sports, ranging from the NBA playoffs and the Super Bowl to women's college basketball and field hockey. I have expressed opinions that have generally tried to deal with very broad issues in sports. I want to discuss one more that Davidson students are lucky enough to be able to understand.

Individual Davidson teams do not lack coverage in this publication. They receive plenty of ink each week during their respective seasons. I choose to not address any particular sport but rather address the Davidson athletic program as a whole. As one of the smallest Division I schools in the country, Davidson focuses on trying to compete at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics without compromising academic standards.

I walked out of CVS today to the sight of Frank Ben-Eze '12 interacting with small children in the parking lot. How many of us have figured out some way to get Stephen Curry '10 to sign something for us so that we can have a lasting memory of the recent basketball success? I am not saying that athletes at other schools do not interact with fans and participate in their communities. They do. I do think it's important to realize how much we take it for granted, though. Case in point: I did not bat an eye at seeing Ben-Eze's interaction today until I sat down to write this article.

Being our school's flagship program, the basketball team obviously receives more press and attention than the numerous other athletes on campus. But those athletes should be recognized for their contributions as well. Athletes do not come to Davidson seeking glory or with delusions of grandeur regarding where sports are going to take them. Rather, they come to receive a world class education in a special place.

Distance runner Lance Harden '09 did not arrive on campus hoping to turn into an Olympic athlete. I lived next to Lance freshman year and did not even realize that he was a runner until he ran circles around the rest of our class in the cake race. Lance just finished a stellar track career with a Southern Conference championship in the 10,000 meter event. Similarly, swimmers Merritt Peele '09 and Alanna Ream '09 did not arrive on campus solely trying to re-write the Davidson record books. But they did.

Even when an athlete does achieve the pinnacle of athletic glory on this campus, as Stephen Curry has done, he stays the same guy as when he arrived. Curry might be leaving early for the draft, but even he could not have dreamed the level of success he could have achieved on the basketball court here. He, too, understood that he was receiving an education first.

With the disappointment at his decision to leave, we can take solace in the fact that a finer ambassador for the school would have been difficult to find. He handled his role as the face of Davidson College with dignity, grace, and class. Never once did we see any negative headline as is typical at many schools that place athletics over academics. For that, I will always be grateful.

We are very lucky to have the ability to watch our athletic teams play under coaches that understand Davidson and its values. Everyone wants our teams to succeed at the highest level possible, but certainly not at the expense of academics and citizenship. Our coaches and

administration have refused to give in to growing pressure to win at all costs. For that, we should be thankful as well.

No Davidsonian writer has needed to write about steroids, drug issues, or arrests with our athletes. Complaints from the student body are few and far between. At such a small school, Davidson athletes have no choice but to infuse themselves into the Davidson community like every other Davidson students. They ask for no special treatment and receive none.

With my career winding down, I look back and am thankful for getting to have such positive interactions with our athletes, coaches, and teams. College sports may fast be becoming more like professional sports, but in our small bubble in North Carolina, our teams have managed to avoid that temptation.

For having teams actually worth pulling for and athletes worth getting to know, we should all feel lucky.