

Pasadena PHS Chronicle

School and Sport: Balancing Life as a Student Athlete

A look into the pros and cons of being a student athlete at PHS

By: Polly McConnell

Tonight, I sat down to write this article after three hours of homework, and before that, a volleyball game in Burbank that pulled me out of my last two class periods.

My situation, though it may sound harrowing, is not rare: it's the life of a student-athlete.

Pasadena High School offers all students the choice of a whopping thirteen different sports to partake in. Athletics is one of PHS's proudest legacies, with a boys' basketball team that's taken the Pacific League Champion title twenty out of the last twenty-one years.

The incredible victories that these players accomplish command no small effort; whether it's waking up at 5:30 am for color guard's zero-period, weight room five days a week, or running forty times across the football field in full padding on the hottest day of August, student-athletes are putting in the work.

Athletics' high participation rates in schools can be attributed to the many benefits of playing sports. Athletics are very rewarding for many, and not just because of the obvious fun that comes with winning games and riding the bus with teammates. Sports offer PE credit, and scholarships, and qualify as impressive extracurriculars when applying for college. Moreover, exercise is crucial for maintaining cardiovascular health and muscle strength, and can even help relieve stress by release of dopamine.

But, like most things, it's a tradeoff: championship titles in exchange for precious hours of the school day, quality free time, and a good night's rest.

Practice is generally three to five times a week after school, and athletes must skip their last two class periods of school on game days. Not only do students miss valuable in-class instruction, but they must take on the responsibility of checking in with their teachers the next day and completing extra work at home.

Just last week, I had to miss four out of five days of my AP Calculus class because of volleyball. By the end of this season, I will have missed this period seventeen times - that's seventeen hours of key instruction in a pretty difficult class, lost. It poses a legitimate question as to how some students can recover not only their grades in these classes but also their understanding of the content.

"It's hard because as a public school, we get the short end of the stick," laments Thor Pearson, varsity swimmer at PHS. Thor grapples with having to miss his 3:15 pm Rose Bowl practices for school, a choice that many students who don't attend traditional public school don't have to worry about because their school accommodates sports-related absences. For someone who aims to attend college on a swimming scholarship, Thor is critically disadvantaged this way. "It's kind of a pay-to-win," he says.

In freshman year, Thor qualified for CIF in swim, but the championship was on the same day as his AP Human Geography exam. Thor was then faced with a strenuous decision - take the exam that he had spent nearly a whole year studying for, or earn a spot among the best high school swimmers in the state? Of course, Thor chose the latter, forcing him to take the test at a later date. But when the day of the retake arrived, he ended up contracting Covid-19. Thor never received college credit for the class.



Though it may be extreme, his story is the perfect example of the disruptive power that athletics can have on a student's academic path. Despite this, Thor sticks with the sport, as do hundreds of his peers at PHS.

"I'm a student-athlete because I need time to diffuse from the six-hour school day that I do," explains Thor. He adds, "I think we have a responsibility to be well-rounded, and to pursue all areas of our lives so that we're actually human beings." He likens an all-academic mindset to that of a robot, without time to focus on emotional well-being, personal hobbies, and maintaining a social life. These undeniably crucial elements of human development are often overlooked in the face of academic excellence.

Being a student-athlete, like any challenge, will take some time to figure out. The best thing you can do is to find a balance between school and sports that works for you. And, if the tireless nights of homework and practice become too much, try to remember why you do what you do: if there's a will, there's a way.

Teacher Spotlight: Mr. Salmon

PHS's favorite psychology teacher: the one and only Mr. Salmon

By: Nolan Romero

Of the many AP courses that PHS offers, AP Psychology has to be among the most fun -, not just because of its interesting topics, but also due to our great Psych teacher, Mr. Salmon. Mr. Salmon has been teaching at PHS for 18 years, spending his first 10 years at PHS teaching history, government, and economics. Mr. Salmon was then asked if would want to teach psychology, which, as we all know, he humbly accepted. "And that was the smartest thing I ever did," he said.

Mr. Salmon told us of his dreams before he ever thought of becoming a teacher. "I wanted to be a trashman when I was 2, 3, 4... I used to watch them every morning," he told me. Then, he would think of being a veterinarian. From that point, Mr. Salmon would graduate from college with a degree in history and a credential in social science, working at an insurance company. "I hated that after a while," he stated. He would then become a substitute teacher, eventually getting his current job here at PHS.

When entering Mr. Salmon's classroom for the first time, you truly get a real sense of his own personality. His classroom contains a framed picture of Walter White and has a previous student's shoe stuck to a board as memorable. Mr. Salmon's classes are often fun and engaging, due largely in part to his bright and colorful personality. I asked Mr. Salmon what his favorite part about being a teacher is, and he responded, "I get a lot of social interaction with lots of people every day. So many different people; so many different personalities." He ended on the note that "I'm not stuck in a cubical all day."

Outside of being a teacher, Mr. Salmon enjoys camping and fishing during the summer, traveling the United States, and working around his yard. He is also a Dodgers fan! (Go Dodgers!)

Mr. Salmon has been working here for 18 years, and his favorite part about working here is the great diversity of the student body. PHS is one of the most diverse schools you can be. "It's one of the most diverse places you can be - all different races, ethnicities, income levels, geniuses, idiots, ... it's a snapshot of society," he told me.

Mr. Salmon will continue to be the school's favorite Psychology teacher, able to bring a little bit of fun and joy from his classes to the students of PHS.



Hey, bulldogs! The chronicle is starting an advice column! Please send in any dilemmas you or your friends are dealing with and we will select one to respond to in the next issue! This will be COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS in order to protect the privacy of our readers.

Use the QR code on the left to submit your question

DISCLAIMER: All released advice will be collectively decided on by Chronicle members and will be approved by our advisors before publication.



> > Campus Scavenger Hunt < <

Have you seen this?



Take a picture of **you with anything bulldog on campus** (statues, murals, etc.) and send it to our Instagram @pasadenahs_chronicle to be featured on our story! Let’s show our bulldog pride!

A Rat on A Mission

By: Emma (Grace) Rispin

Luna wakes up and smells food. Her small nose twitches and she notices that the light has begun to dim in her makeshift den, although the heat of the day still hangs in the air. She feels her stomach rumble and realizes that it has been a while since she last ate. The inhabitants of the building beyond never seem to like her, so she doesn’t venture out much when they’re bustling about. No use being around those who do not want her. But now the sun has begun to set, painting the sky in soft hues, and all has grown quiet. Squeezing out of the place she currently calls home—inside the base of a sculptural rose vase—her feet pad along the painted pavement, making sure to stick close to the side of the building. Soon enough, the wall falls away, leaving only an open patch of concrete. Luna feels her mind start to grow anxious, but she takes a deep breath and remembers the phrase her father always told her: “Better to do it afraid than not do it at all”.

She steps out onto the pavement, feeling the residual warmth seep into her feet. As she walks, her mind begins to wander back to when her father was first showing her all the nooks and crannies of this place. One morning, he woke her up earlier than usual and told her it was time to explore the world. Even just the thought made her heart speed up in panic, but he sat with her until she calmed down. He told her it was okay to be afraid, but the world was so much more beautiful when you faced it head-on.

So they set out together, and he was right: it was wonderful. He showed her all the best places to get food, where the best views were, and where the kind old cockroach lived. But her favorite thing by far was when they passed a wall coated in color, every inch, filled with shapes she didn’t recognize. And yet, she couldn’t seem to pull her eyes away from it.

She is pulled from her thoughts by the sound of muffled cries, and she adjusts her course in search of the source of the sound. Looking around, she sees a big Creature from the building sobbing inside one of their metal beasts. Quietly creeping closer, she wonders why they are alone. She thinks about what she can do to help when something catches her attention—a small flower growing out of a crack in the pavement. Scurrying away, she gently plucks the flower. Now here comes the tricky part. It is dangerous to be in such a clear view of a Big Creature, but this one is sad, and Luna knows it is always good to help someone when they are sad. Ever so carefully she walks towards the beast’s open door, making sure she only goes as far as she has to. She places the flower on the ground, looking up only once before running away. She could've sworn she saw the Creature look down, though. Once her breath has returned to its normal pace, she continues on her trek.



Illustrated by Kaley Simkins, 11

Club Spotlight: Mental Health Awareness Club

By: Camilla Leyva

The Mental Health Awareness Club (MHAC) is a hidden gem of Pasadena High School’s campus. The founders of MHAC work diligently to create a safe and friendly space for all students at school. Each meeting focuses on different topics of mental health and wellness. Activities vary from presentations, informational videos, meditations, guest speakers, and fun crafts! There are also organized out-of-school activities planned for the members of MHAC to further the club’s positive impact.

The Mental Health Awareness Club uniquely allows members to voice not just their worries, but their moments of joy as well. The club is centered around its members, aiming to grant students a break from school’s more hectic qualities. MHAC’s constant focus on its members’ needs sets it apart from the other clubs at Pasadena High School. The Mental Health Awareness Club’s pace is personalized to fit its members with meetings connected to current events, activities that lessen major exams and school stressors, and regular communication between members and the club cabinet.

A new year for the Mental Health Awareness Club is on the horizon. This year, MHAC hopes to spread the club’s optimism to more students on campus. Increasing the number of students acknowledging MHAC for the marvelous mental health resource it is will benefit students both academically and emotionally. Be sure to be on the lookout for the Mental Health Awareness Club (meetings in G205)!

Across

- 3. Prominent figure in a widespread religion
- 8. A rainbow of people
- 9. Building better politicians
- 10. For all the budding storytellers
- 11. Sole, soul, ____
- 13. Don't fret, come to _____ club
- 14. First three letters of an underwater vehicle, scrambled
- 15. A country in the Middle East

Down

- 1. Stargazers
- 2. Where humans create friends made of nuts and bolts
- 4. Meaning "bridge" in English
- 5. Supporting our musical programs!
- 6. Percent of STEM workforce that women make up
- 7. Hmm... I can't find this one piece
- 12. Not blue or red but...

PHS Club Crossword

