



Studying ... Sport and Exercise Science?

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"Just playing sport?"

Being a student of Sport and Exercise Science, it is important that you are prepared for three years of questions like, "So do you just play sport all day?" and other insinuations that this particular course is not the height of academia. It may be as much of a shock to you as to others that there is actually work involved in a sport science degree. It's really varied and generally interesting because it's all about sport.

I am sure that one sport science student's experience is vastly different to another's, so my plan is to tell you a bit about my experience and hope that it is in some way helpful to you. My experience may not be the most representative as I focused mainly on the exercise physiology and sports nutrition side of things and didn't do a great deal of sport psychology or sociology over the course of my degree. I have broken things down into *Being a Christian and the subject-matter* and *Being a Christian and the sports culture*.

Being a Christian and the subject-matter

Sport science covers a huge range of disciplines and subjects from policy to psychology to physiology (and other subjects that don't begin with 'p'). It is difficult to identify and address all the possible issues that may arise for Christians. There are however a few assumptions that pop up in various modules

along the way.

Rarely, in my experience, was God overtly opposed; however, God was generally omitted. In sport psychology, the idea of people being motivated by a desire to glorify God is not even considered. God's role as creator is not acknowledged in physiology nor His role as judge taken into account in discussion of ethics in sport. God is replaced with a number of substitutes; extrinsic reward, the theory of evolution and the human conscience and sometimes even with sport itself.

Today's culture has raised sport up to be an instrument of power and influence. In a speech endorsing London as the host city for the 2012 Olympics, Nelson Mandela said: "*Sport has the power to change the world, the power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way that little else can ... sport can create hope ... it is an instrument for peace*". Sport can be made out to be the answer to all the world's problems. I have found that this worldview is peddled nowhere more blatantly than in the sport science lecture theatre.

These challenging situations will arise, where it is possible to go along with what everyone else is doing or to stand out and instead do what is most honouring to God, showing that Jesus is your treasure. When they do arise, it is really tough to know what to do in the heat of the moment.

I found that it's so helpful to think through these situations before you have to face them. For example, to decide before you go out how many drinks you will have; to decide what to say when someone asks you why you aren't getting drunk and to pray that God will help you to honour Him when it comes to the crunch.

So...

These are big issues to think through and deal with and I can't give you all the answers, let alone in a few paragraphs of my babblings. Whilst I was at university I was part of a [Christians in Sport](#) (CIS) group: we met once a week for an hour to look at what the Bible said

about a particular issue for sports people, to pray for each other and our non-Christian team mates and to encourage each other in sharing the gospel with them and playing our sport in a way that honours God.

To meet with other Christians who understood the struggles and the excitement and the opportunity of being a Christian in a sports club and who were trying to share the gospel in a similar setting was really helpful. It was also brilliant to study the Bible and apply it specifically to a sporting context.

Another way to get connected, involved and supported is to join a CIS sports network – providing an opportunity to meet others who play your sport around the country, to encourage one another in living out your faith in your sport and to consider ways that you can share the gospel in your sports network.

I went along to some training events that Christians in Sport put on to really get to grips with what it looks like to represent Jesus in a sports club and specific sporting situations, to pray for your non-Christian team mates, to play in a way that honours God on and off the pitch and to say something of the good news of Jesus when the opportunities come. There are a lot of great resources on the CIS website, universitysport@christiansinsport.org.uk.

I loved playing sport at university and there were definite ups and downs but given the chance I'd do it again (hopefully a bit differently having learnt from my experiences). There are tough times but there are brilliant times and chances to share the good news of Jesus with lost people.

Studying sport science was really enjoyable and if you're thinking about it or are currently in the midst of it, make the most of it, enjoy it, weigh-up what you're told, be watchful and make the most of the opportunity to live and speak for Jesus.

Useful Links:

Christians in Sport (BRF, 2000) [Image]