

## **What experiences are needed to become a Division 1 Baseball, Football, or Track Athlete? A Retrospective Study of the Quantity of Deliberate Play**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The acquisition of expert performance in various sports is generally attributed to the extended engagement in deliberate practice activities. Sport-specialization in high-school or earlier derives from the intent of developing sport expertise as well as the economic benefit of obtaining collegiate scholarships. Alternatively, sport-sampling allows for deliberate play. Deliberate play activities provide youths an opportunity to explore a variety of movements and tactics while encouraging innovation, improvisation, and the development of strategies. The influence of the family in the development of talent in sport is already established. Limited research exists that examines how deliberate practice activities in varied extracurricular activities throughout one's youth contribute to performance in a particular sport.

**PURPOSE:** Investigate the quantity of deliberate play that is required to become a collegiate division 1 athlete in the sports of baseball, football and track and field. **METHODS:** We used a structured online interview as proposed by Côté, Ericsson and Law (2005) to collect retrospective information. Fifty-one Division 1 collegiate athletes rated the daily activities they were involved when they were young as well as during their current period of development and assessed different factors that may have contributed to their current achievement level. **RESULTS:** Concerning early activities, 96% of the participants were involved in sports, 65% in musical, 17% in artistic, 72% in organized games with rules, and 48% in other sport-related activities (e.g. watching sports on television). In regards to physical factors that may have contributed to their exceptional athletic achievement, all participants' height was average or above average when compared to peers and 78% sustained injuries that had adverse effect on their activity involvement. During their current stage of development, the participants tend to spend 26 hours per week sleeping, 10 hours eating, 10 hours socializing, 8 hours for school/career activities, and 8 hours studying. Lastly, although 75% of the athletes' parents were not top athletes, 75% of them played a role and 86% were very involved when the participants first started in sport, and all parents were supportive/excited when their children decided to specialize in sports. **CONCLUSION:** The findings provide useful insights to all stakeholders (e.g., parents, coaches, inspiring collegiate athletes, athletic trainers, managers) in regards to developmental issues of D1 collegiate student-athletes, such as early sport and non-sport activity involvement, current daily activities, and the role of family. The developmental path of D1 student-athletes support Simon's and Chase's 10-year rule and Côté's impact of family. Comparing the pattern of results in the developmental history between collegiate and professional and high-school and professional athletes should be included in the goals of future efforts.