

SOMETIMES ATHLETES HAVE TO ASK,

What's the cost of winning

The separation between being a student and a student-athlete is a thin line. Students at Eaton High School are often told by teachers and adults that they “are students before they are athletes.” But sometimes students pay a high price for trying to be both.

According to CHSAA, schools in Colorado have more students competing in sports than ever before. In the 2016-17 school year, 60.26 percent of students, a total of 139,969 athletes, competed in sports. These are the highest figures since the survey began after the 1988-89 season.

The town of Eaton itself has a total of 5,224 people, according to the United States Census Bureau, and approximately 554 of those numbers included the students currently enrolled.

According to Athletic Director Steve Longwell, a total of 258 students have participated in sport since the beginning of the 2018-19 school year not counting this year's spring season. The numbers are equally divided between boys and girls each totaling a whopping 129 athletes.

With such a small-town environment, sports engulf students who try to keep the tradition of winning alive and well. Eaton High School as a whole has won a total of 35 state championships, 11 just from the game of baseball, the pride and joy of Eaton for generations of boys.

Dalton Logan(20) said, “I've played since I was four. When I'm on the field I'm not playing for that championship: I'm playing for that one game, to get me to that championship.”

But back in 2015 Logan tore his MCL, tibia fibula and was told he would be on crutches for the next eight months with the possibility that this injury

would be a problem for the rest of his life.

According to Colorado's Boulder's summary report of National High School sports-related injuries for the 2016-17 school year, 3,324 athletes sustained injuries competing or practicing.

Molly Maguire, EHS anatomy and physiology teacher said, “I wish people would think about the fact that their knee, their arm, their leg, their shoulder, has to last them another 60 to 70 years after high school. And that maybe playing through the pain to win a state championship is not going to be worth it when they are 50 or 60 years old and having a shoulder or knee replaced.”

A common mentality among athletes at Eaton High School seems to be “are you hurt or are you hurting?” It's an injury when they have to say that the pain has become too much, and what they're feeling isn't due to the difficulty of the workout but rather because something is genuinely wrong.

Not only are the students at Eaton High School preoccupied with sports but many students are involved in clubs that require time after and during school.

During the Fall marching band is out at 7 a.m. to prepare for performances during football games and against other schools marching band. This fall marching band placed fourth at state--the farthest the band has ever gone. Colton Sell (20) performed in three differ-

ent bands this year--marching band, symphonic band, and jazz ensemble. Sell said, “I found that doing all those bands helps me in school it gives me something to relieve stress and take my mind off of things.”

Some students are also involved in both sports, choir, and band whether it is all three or only two. Katie Gomez (22) said, “It's hard being in a sport and band but I've learned to manage my time more wisely, and I think that's a

good life lesson for me to have.” The students of Eaton begin to learn life lessons in all the activities they choose to be involved in. Jennifer Jarnagin (21) said, “The most difficult thing is balancing, sports, homework, and other social stuff I want to do. I never begin to dislike playing sports because the of the people and being active is always something I enjoy.”

Being a student-athlete creates a particular person one who is always want to be the best in almost everything they do. Zac Lemon, football coach and biology teacher, said, “Everyone is different, but what I do see is those high achievers are always high achievers no matter what they do. So if they are a great student usually they are a great leader in a club or in a sport. You are who you are.”

The pressure of being a student-athlete affects everyone, but more importantly the incoming freshman who are thrown into the mix of school

and sports. Ryan Dirkson (22) said “No I was not ready for it I would come home from football and be so tired that I just wouldn't do my homework. I didn't talk to my teachers and I'm noticing now that I probably should have and I'm learning how to manage my time now rather than later.”

For most student-athletes the cost of winning is worth the hardship and obstacles all for those heartfelt experiences and people met along the way that made it worth the long practices, late night cram sessions and bumps and bruises.

But at some point every athlete has to question if the breaking, tearing and fracturing is worth it. If a life-long injury worth the cost of winning,

Bekah Scott (20) used to play basketball, but after she tore her ACL, meniscus, and sprained her LCL, she decided to hang up her Fightin' Reds uniform. “The risk of injury isn't worth it anymore,” Scott said.

“I think it's just about what the athletes want to be some day. I want to be a mom and now, because of my knee, I won't be able to crawl around with my kids or squat down to their level.”

Winning at Eaton High School is a high like none other--being part of a tradition that goes back a 100 years, the friendships and the fun along the way. But after injuries, or a future faced with pain, sometimes a student-athlete just has to ask if it is worth the cost.

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-Molly Maguire

