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Back to SCHOOL Back to HOCKEY

BY ERIN SCHOLLAERT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Michael Iver Jacobsen

6 Tips for Creating Balance Between the Classroom And The Rink

Many student-athletes feel a flourishing hockey career is determined by what the scoresheet reads. However, success is better defined when it's clear that the game helps to mold you into a well-rounded person. This is done when you create balance between your school, social, and athletic paths.

Finding a way to juggle it all may seem daunting, especially when hockey is so time-consuming—but the truth is finding a proper mix between school and hockey isn't hard if you have a plan.

With school back in session across the country, it's important to look at ways to create balance in your life so you can find success on and off the ice.

Back to SCHOOL, Back to HOCKEY



1

Break Down Your Goals

Big dreams are much easier to achieve when broken into smaller, more manageable goals.

Instead of saying, "I want to get a 4.0 this year," or "I want to set a record for points," try going class by class or game by game saying things like, "I am going to try to get an A on this next test," or "I want to get on the scoresheet two times this game."

Smaller manageable goals are easier to achieve. They fuel the success motor and keep you going so the big goal becomes a side effect of doing the little things right. More importantly, they give you more balance. It's easier to focus on a small hockey goal, a small academic goal, and a small social goal than it is to focus on going to the NAHL and landing a spot on a Division I team.

2

Practice Time Management

You have a tournament this weekend out of state, a paper due on Tuesday and a geometry test on Thursday. Oh, don't forget about practice three nights this week, plus weight room and film ses-

The saying, "Procrastination is a thief," is true. If you put things off or fall behind, you are going to get robbed of ice time.

sions, private lessons and a significant other who wants to go out and spend time with you.

Putting it down on a "To-Do" list may make you feel overwhelmed, but it doesn't have to be that way.

There are many ways you can manage your time. If you are a digital person, your phone's calendar or notes are



A hockey player's schedule can be quite overwhelming. Thankfully, there are many ways to help manage your time. One tip is to download a calendar app on your phone or to use a planner to organize your to-do list.

great tools that you can use to organize your to-do lists. If you aren't a fan of what your phone comes equipped with, you can download countless third-party apps. Todoist, Calendly, and iStudiez are all great tools you can add to your phone.

If you find the old fashion school issued planner helps you better, then, sharpen that pencil. It's good idea to use it to break down larger assignments into smaller tasks to complete each day. Be sure to write them in your planner.

Another way to stay on top of things is to use a white-board calendar to put your days and weeks into perspective. You can even take a picture of it and make it your phone's background for the week so you always know what's going on.

Regardless of what tool you choose, you must ensure you always record due dates on your calendar and break big assignments into smaller chunks. Then, make a weekly schedule and stick to it.

The saying, "Procrastination is a thief," is true. If you put things off or fall behind, you are going to get robbed of ice time. No one wants to see that happen.

Remember to include some downtime, or you will set yourself up for failure.

3

Utilize 21st Century Resources

Many people argue that using technology is a form of cheating. While they are not wrong in this line of thinking, there are ways you can use technology to help you without crossing the line into cheating.

For example, you can run an essay through Grammarly to check for errors. If the piece is yours, and you rely on a tool to check your work, you are simply saving time and being mindful about doing a good job.

On the other hand, if you ask ChatGPT to spit out a 500-word English paper or PhotoMath to solve your algebra homework problems, you are well past the line.

Remember, for every one AI tool out there to do a job for you, there are several that are trying to catch you. Schools get hundreds of emails every day about AI detection tools. It's easier to do your best, use the resources at your disposal, and don't enter the gray when it comes to original work. It's not worth it, and you'll have to redo the job or even worse, fail the assignment, when you get caught.

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4

Make Time for a Social Life

The term “burnout” is heard a lot in the hockey community. Lessons, mini-camps, and extra showcases come at a cost—friends outside of the rink.

Remember to make time for school dances, birthday parties and sleepovers with your classmates. Attempt to get involved in various clubs and different things at school. Maybe it is student government, a media organization or e-sports. Don't be nervous to dedicate some time to other hobbies and interests beyond playing hockey.

Hockey can certainly be a big part of your life, but if you allow it to become the only part of your life, you will look back and wish you would have done things differently. Practice those time management skills and get involved in something outside of hockey that interests you. It will help you grow into a more well-rounded person.

5

Don't Be Afraid to Take a Breather

Sometimes, your body will flat-out tell you, “I am tired, and I need some Netflix.” Listen to your body! You don't need a stick in your hand or your nose in a book all day long. It's OK to take a few hours to decompress. It's good for you. Trust that you know what you want to achieve in the classroom and on the ice and that your work ethic and grit will get you there.

Even the hardest workers on and off the ice need a day to binge the latest season of their favorite show. Take it!

Even the hardest workers on and off the ice need a day to binge the latest season of their favorite show. Take it!

6

Trust that Your Teachers Understand

One of the easiest ways to stay on top of things is turning to your teachers and letting them know you play hockey. You will be surprised how invested they become in your success on and off

the ice.

The key to getting help is simple. Don't be afraid to ask for it. Teachers want to see you do well, and when you struggle, they want to help you turn it around.

Create a rapport with all of your teachers, so that when you do hit a bump in your academic journey, (and all student-athletes hit bumps) approaching them isn't something to worry about, but rather, just another daily conversation.

Balancing a sport as demanding as hockey with school is a challenging task. It takes motivation, determination and a lot of late nights. However, the rewards are endless. The balancing act will teach you life skills like teamwork, physical endurance, perseverance, commitment, and time management that will translate into college and your career.

When you feel overwhelmed between what needs to be done on the ice and in the classroom, take a step back, look at the big picture, set small goals, plan, and start grinding.

Will it be easy? Doubtful.

Will it be worth it? Absolutely. ☆

Erin Schollaert, a hockey mom of three, has spent 17 of years with the Seneca Valley School District, a district outside of Pittsburgh, as a middle school English and a high-school business teacher.



→ Welcome back for a new season! USA Hockey is excited to see what you'll accomplish on and off the ice this season. At USA Hockey, we're here to support and celebrate the entire hockey family, while welcoming new smiling faces into the greatest sport on earth.

BY CALEIGH BURCHFIELD

PLAYING SMART

Lacey
EDEN

Danny
NELSON

Balance is extremely important. Few practice this better than college athletes, excelling both on and off the ice. However, as essential as their successes are in the locker room, emphasis is also placed on excellence in the classroom.

Just ask Danny Nelson, who graduated from high school among the top of his classmates and wrapped up his time at USA Hockey's National Team Development Program with a gold medal at the 2023 IIHF Under-18 Men's World Championship in May.

Nelson, a 2023 second-round pick of the New York Islanders, recalled how important time management was for him while training and studying in Plymouth, Michigan—the home of the NTDP.

"Finding a balance was huge in my time at the NTDP," Nelson said. "I found a balance between getting schoolwork done in the morning and finding a little bit more time after we were done at the rink to finish it at home. It taught me how to manage my time better and learn how to study better."

Nelson, a forward from Maple Grove, Minnesota, just began



I feel like when I'm doing well in school, I'm doing well in hockey, and I'm trying to be at the top of my game for both.

— **Lacey EDEN**



his freshman year at the University of Notre Dame.

He said he'll bring the study habits he learned during his NTDP career with him to Notre Dame.

"We had six weeks of summer school," Nelson explained, "So I was trying to practice those habits—finding spaces to study, when to study, how long I need to study. It helped me to go through that summer school process and take a couple classes. Those will be lessons I carry on to this this fall on top of everything I learned at the NTDP."

Lacey Eden, a senior at the University of Wisconsin, won a gold medal with the U.S. Women's

National Team at the 2023 IIHF Women's World Championship while still being amidst her college coursework.

She also has won two national championships as a member of the Badgers.

Eden agreed it can be beneficial to hit the books in the offseason.

"I've found it helpful to try to get some of my harder classes out of the way in the summer, even though they're super condensed, just so that I can focus completely on them and then completely on playing hockey during the season," Eden said.

"That's definitely been super helpful and an amazing feature that Wisconsin offers us."

Like all student-athlete programs in the country, both Notre Dame and Wisconsin strive to set their players up for universal success, from world-class professors to

great study spaces.

"They offer great facilities for us, like study rooms right at the rink," Eden said of Wisconsin. "If I have time before or after practice, I can hop in there for a little bit and get some work done. It makes everything nice and easy because it's all in the same place. It's important to know your schedule with hockey for the week so that you can allocate what time you want to spend studying."

Nelson echoed her statement, emphasizing the importance of devoting an appropriate amount of time to his academic workload.

"I'm always sure to set aside time to find a quiet space, put my phone down and get



I'm always sure to set aside time to find a quiet space, put my phone down and get schoolwork done. I make sure it's uninterrupted time.

— **Danny NELSON**



VIDEO: DANNY NELSON IS READY TO TAKE HIS TALENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME.

school work done,” Nelson said. “I make sure its uninterrupted time. Academics have always been really important to me. My parents pushed my siblings and I to make sure we were doing well in school. They always said if we didn’t get our homework done, we couldn’t go to practice, so that kind of always motivated us to get done.”

Eden said it’s also always been a balancing act where school and hockey go hand in hand ever since she grew up in Annapolis, Maryland.

“Keeping everything in line is super important,” Eden concluded. “I feel like when I’m doing well in school, I’m doing well in hockey, and I’m trying to be at the top of my game for both. I feel like everything in life goes together. You don’t want to spend all your time on one thing because academics are so crucial for the future and gaining that knowledge right now is super important to me.” ☆

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