

# I GOT IT!

## Talking Leadership On and Off the Field

By Jen Miller

After a long day of classes, studying, and meetings, a student leader might want to take a break, watch a little TV, catch a nap. But for the student leaders featured below, the day just keeps on going with practices, team workouts, and games. These students also are athletes, and they're juggling the regular rigors of college with sports.

Sports not only involve physical training but also mental dedication, time management, concentration, and leadership. The students interviewed here have shown great levels of achievement and success in their athletic, academic, and personal lives thanks to the leadership skills gained in sports. These students see sports as a way to become involved and develop valuable skills that'll stay with them long after they've graduated from the NCAA.

### Time Management

The University of South Florida's Ale Domingos found success both on and off the court. This volleyball captain is a two-time Conference USA First Team selection and two-time C-USA Setter of the Year honoree.

This past spring, Domingos was awarded an NCAA postgraduate scholarship. She's the only woman from Florida to win this national award and was given the scholarship based on her overall GPA, success in her chosen sport, and excellent sportsmanship.

But how does she manage it all? As captain of the USF volleyball team, Domingos was expected to lead her teammates by example in practice, academics, and social activities, and she did so by keeping her own activities in balance. "It's essential that you learn what's the most urgent thing you need to do, make up a list, and set a weekly schedule. That way you can plan ahead what and when to do your assignments."

While Domingos says that playing sports has helped her learn how to manage her time efficiently, she also thinks it's strengthened her trust in others. "As a leader, you have to satisfy objectives while getting trust from others around you," she says. "I believe sports help you develop self-confidence that'll enable you to pass on such confidence to those you lead."

Domingos also stresses that she will use what she learned playing volleyball to help her through the rest of her life. "Learning how to work with different people who deal with pressure and stress in different ways and who handle challenges distinctly is

very important to any career you might pursue."

### Seeing the Whole Situation

When Josh Atkinson transferred to Flagler College, sports were only one factor in his decision. "I had four main areas I was looking for: education, social, spiritual, and golf," he says. Atkinson, one of the top five players for the Flagler golf team, stresses that "education comes first because I pride myself on my grades and academics."

While practice and school take up most of Atkinson's time, he's also a mentor for Young Life, an outreach program where mentors develop friendships with high school students in their shared Christianity. "I have to try to set an example with the students," Atkinson says. "I also have to set an example with the other members of my team."

Atkinson says his combination of leadership on the golf team and as a mentor in Youth Life has helped him when assessing situations, especially in working with people. "I'm able to see what's going on in a person's life that might affect what they're doing," he says.

Atkinson stresses that any student athlete must pay close attention to his or her academics or easily could fall behind, and it's this vigilance with his own teammates that helped Atkinson develop his leadership abilities. "If you don't focus your time appropriately before a tournament, game, or match, you're going to be seriously behind." He recommends that student athletes remember the reason they're in school is to learn.

### Focus and Determination

Sarah Guilfyle of Jacksonville University was nearly forced out of sports in high school because of a back injury. That's when she turned to crew. "I started rowing when I knew I couldn't be sidelined anymore," she says. Guilfyle then was accepted to an Australian Institute of Sport rowing camp, and it's all been down river since.

This Australian native has been a varsity crew member since her freshman year in college and was captain in her

freshman and sophomore years but declined being captain for a third year to "bring forth new leaders from lower classmen in the team."

Guilfyle points to numerous leadership skills she's learned through crew, emphasizing that "any activity with a group will always extract leadership experience." She points to a study conducted by Australia Rowing that studied the success of former/current athletes in the workplace and found athletes were one step ahead. "Work ethic, commitment, dedication, follow-through, and enthusiasm are just some key components that, according to the study, make athletes extremely desirable in the workplace," she says.

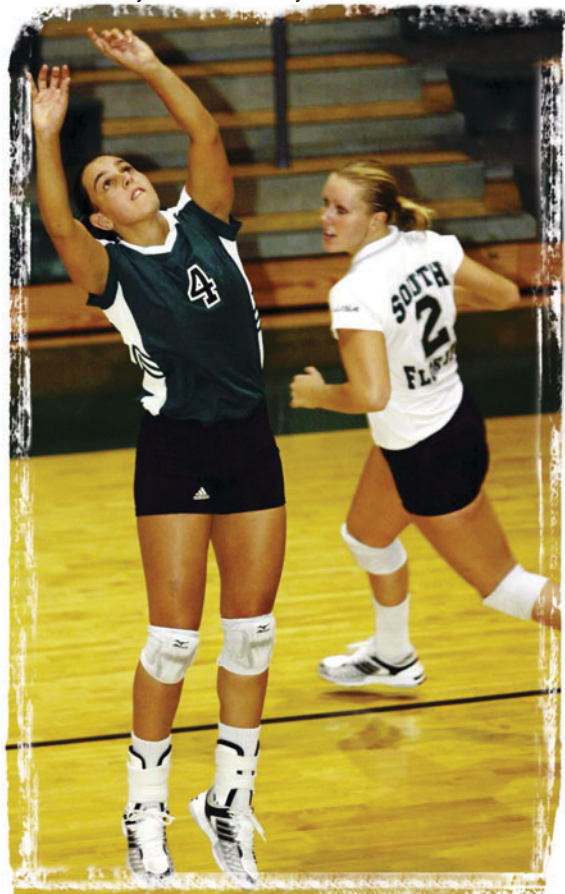
Indeed, Guilfyle already has begun to apply these characteristics to her professional life as director of media relations for the newly formed non-profit organization, Frum Tha Ground Up, Inc. She's also the president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

Guilfyle says time management has been crucial to her success. Focusing on the tasks at hand also has helped her in balancing so many activities at once. "My practice time is my practice time, and I won't be thinking about academics while there and vice versa." Focus in the midst of chaos can help leaders in any field do the best job they can.

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The University of South Florida's Ale Domingos reaches high both athletically and academically.



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