



The ride of a lifetime

Student athletes tell the ups and downs of their time at A&M

Story by Brian Ruff
Photos by Guy Rogers

Finding a parking spot at the Student Recreation Center is never a problem for junior motor development major Chris Nelan. In fact, he can just about pick whichever one he wants. No, Nelan is not a parking fanatic, he just happens to be there when the lot is empty. Nelan is a student athlete, reporting to his 6 a.m. practice.

Nelan is a junior freestyle swimmer on the Texas A&M swimming and diving team, and like many other varsity athletes, his day starts when the sun and most A&M students are not up yet.

Nelan and other athletes face other drawbacks besides early morning workouts.

"The time management part of being an athlete is probably the toughest," Nelan said. "You spend most of your time in class and with workouts; when you get home, you don't feel like studying."

However, Nelan said learning to manage your time can be a substantial asset for the future.

After his hour and a half morning workout, Nelan heads to class and then to another practice in the afternoon.

Nelan's schedule may not seem hectic compared to senior Bethel Johnson's schedule. Johnson takes part in two sports: football and track.

Johnson, who plays wide receiver on the A&M football team and runs on the 4X 100-meter relay team during the spring, said he used to tell the other track athletes how easy their workouts were. Johnson has since had a change of opinion.

"It's not easy," Johnson said. "You have to do two workouts, and usually you get no break at all."

Nelan said one of the benefits of being an athlete at A&M is that you have a group of friends your freshman year, and with the travel and workouts, these friends become

your second family. Many students find jobs to help ease the financial burden of college.

According to Athletic Department Compliance Monitoring Coordinator Wispeny Floyd, student athletes are not allowed to make more than \$2,000 over the amount of a full academic scholarship in an academic year.

The athletic compliance office keeps track of who pays the athletes' expenses: car payments, rent and other living expenses.

Floyd also said the NCAA does not allow freshmen on scholarship to be employed.

"We want freshmen to get used to their schedule, classes and course work," Floyd said. "They need to fit in as a student before taking on other responsibilities."

"You spend most of your time in class and with workouts; when you get home, you don't feel like studying."

— Chris Nelan
junior freestyle swimmer

Athletes are also not allowed to give paid private lessons, but Floyd said the athletes can get paid to give lessons in other sports.

The Athletic Department performs a random drug test on athletes once a week. The NCAA and the Big 12 Conference also perform drug tests on athletes at random.

According to NCAA regulations, if the NCAA finds an athlete in violation of the drug policy, the athlete is not eligible to participate in regular season or postseason

competition for one year. If found in violation a second time, the athlete loses all remaining eligibility.

Travel schedules for athletes also can make classes difficult, Nelan said.

"Most profs give different tests for makeup exams. Instead of taking a multiple choice test, you may have to take an essay test," Nelan said. "Most of them do a good job and understand, but you do get some that think you require special treatment."

All collegiate athletes, including those who are not on scholarship, must abide by the regulations of the NCAA.

Sophomore business administration major Ashley Jabbal, despite being a non-scholarship athlete, must make it to 6:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. practices each day.

"Sometimes I wake up, and it's hard to keep going," Jabbal said. "I tell myself in the morning that nobody is giving me any money to be here, but I get up and do it."

Jabbal, who runs cross-country and is on the track team, turned down scholarship opportunities at other schools so she could go to A&M as a walk-on her freshman year.

"My freshman year was pretty difficult," Jabbal added. "It was tough coming from high school where there are some great runners, and then coming here where every runner is a great runner, and they are really into it."

Jabbal, who takes 15 hours a semester, said being a non-scholarship athlete has its benefits.

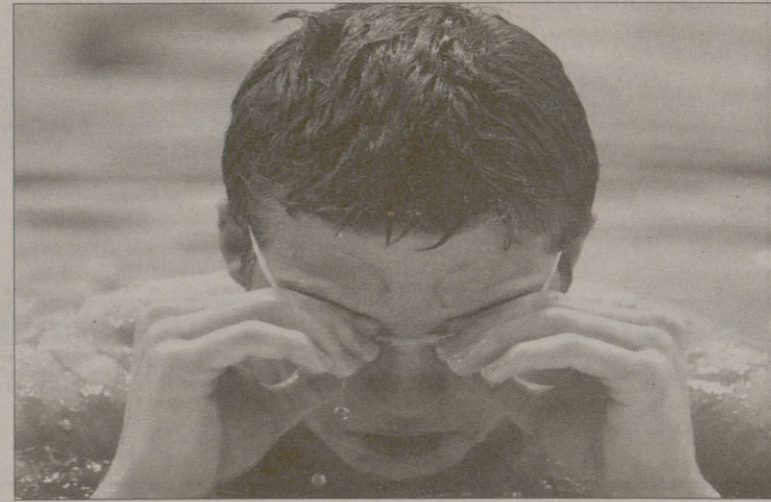
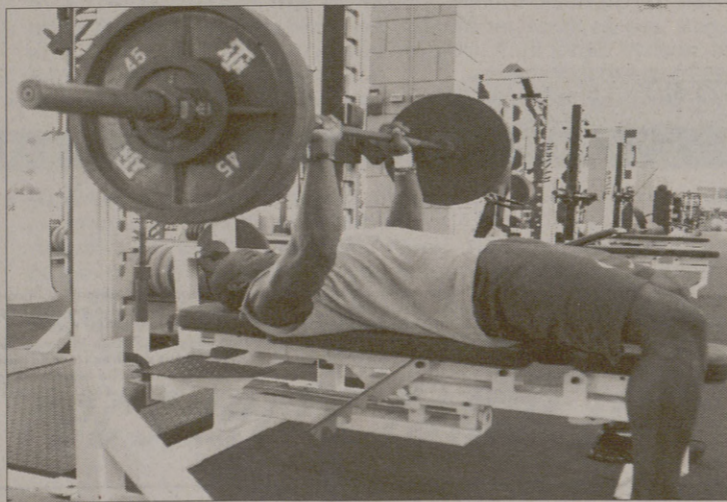
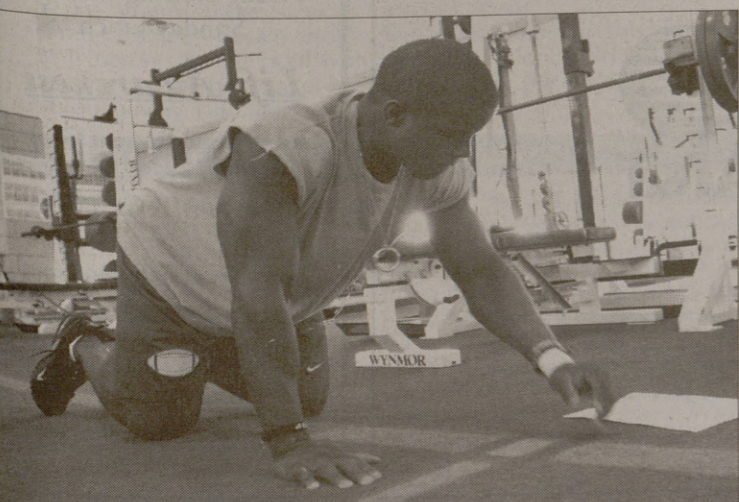
"It takes some of the pressure off," Jabbal said. "If I don't perform well, the only person I really let down is myself."

Despite the drawbacks of being an athlete at Texas A&M, Nelan said that you meet people who can help you out in the future.

"The networking here is really great," Nelan said. "You get to meet people in charge. You make some really great connections. It really helps you when you get out there."



Clockwise from top left: Freestyle swimmer Chris Nelan takes a break during an afternoon workout at the Student Recreation Center. Nelan cuts through the water during his 6 a.m. swim practice. Wide receiver Bethel Johnson makes a cut against McNeese State in 2001. Nelan pushes a 45-lb. weight during his workout at the Netum Steed Research & Conditioning Laboratory. Nelan adjusts his goggles during practice at the Rec Center Natatorium. Johnson works out on the bench press at Steed. Johnson checks his workout sheet during his workout at Steed.



HE BATTALION
eille
ued from
l science
Aguirre,
h she has
e campus
ieland is
t week I
r, and a
Twelfth
l the bard
e was im
the screen
with ex
said.
University
retakers
committed
resume her
football
are looking
eille return
and stand
Twelfth
of Aggie
Aguirre
mily friend
rs in the
vas and
received
Hawkins
g three
rin, Josep
Murphy
murder
h escape
itted suicide
red when
authorities
ut a month
in this ag
said the
d not charge
ss of the case
erbs
ue
ction
ve, MD
500
cover accu
ortance
Wallace
Valley
Valling
eems
oldridge
lum:
illespie
oman
Martin
Fright
Lange
TALION
Castillo
Chief
att.com
1055-4729
rough
nesters
and
ig the
holidays
University
Station, TX
ress change
iversity, 1111
43-1111
ews depart
ts at Res
n of Stud
ent of Jour
14 Reed
me: 845-3333
roomtheatt
ebatt.com
of advertis
endosame
local, and
345-2636
5-0568
McDonald
m. Monday