



COLLEGE CHEERLEADING

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While several male athletes are limited to predominantly male sports in high school such as football, baseball, etc., a new trend has sparked the interest of a large number of them, particularly those athletes entering college. Over the last decade, cheerleading has grown into a widely recognized and respected athletic activity, one that requires a great deal of strength and determination.

Playing on a highly competitive team throughout the majority of your life, then being told you don't have a chance of making a collegiate team can be a tremendous blow to your life-long dreams. For some, your situation isn't nearly that extreme. Maybe you just want a change of scenery for the next four years.

Whatever the reason, cheerleading has opened many doors for those who thought their days of being on an athletic team were over.

"Coming into a big sports college like the University of Texas, I didn't really have the option of trying out for the competitive sports teams they had to offer," says UT cheerleader Jordan Lally. "I was basically limited to intramural sports and working out on my own. My roommates were cheerleaders, and after trying it out several times, I found it to be a lot of fun. It was a way to bring the 'team' aspect back into my life."

Making the transition from an all-male sports team to a coed atmosphere, such as cheerleading, on the collegiate level can be quite complex, especially if you don't know what to expect. Though you're still participating with the "team" frame of mind when cheering, for some, it's more about individual skills and talent in the beginning.



HOW STRONG ARE YOU? HOW HIGH CAN YOU THROW SO-AND-SO? WHAT KIND OF TUMBLING SKILLS DO YOU HAVE? THOSE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS MALE CHEERLEADERS MUST ASK THEMSELVES, AS THOSE ARE THE QUESTIONS MOST COACHES WILL BE ASKING THEM.

Once you've made the team, as the year progresses, you start to realize and understand the importance of team work in cheerleading. Everyone has to work together to make a pyramid hit, everyone has to push each other to keep their stunts up, and everyone takes part in getting the crowd involved in the game. So you can imagine how ridiculous the typical male cheerleader stereotype seems to a guy once he gives it a try.

"When I thought of male cheerleaders, I thought of guys that were either too weak to participate in more demanding sports or simply lacked the motivation," Lally explains. "After becoming a cheerleader myself, I found these assumptions to be completely false. My fellow teammates are some of the strongest guys I know, and a lack of motivation is simply out of the question."

"I found out early on that cheering in college was a way to challenge myself by getting better and physically stronger, all while having fun at the same time. I sure proved my own and I'm sure lots of other guys' stereotypes wrong."

FOR COACHES, GAINING STRONG ATHLETES LIKE FOOTBALL AND SOCCER PLAYERS IS A GREAT ADVANTAGE. ACCORDING TO ONE COACH IN RENO, NEVADA, WHAT HIS GUYS LEARNED ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD IS ACTUALLY ONE OF THE BIG THINGS THAT HELPED HIS TEAM IMPROVE.

There are times when you'll have team members, who have cheered for several years, who can represent their school with

poise and dignity, and they might have the best skills you've ever seen. But when it comes to working together as a team, they haven't got the slightest clue. Those guys, who have been on a competitive sports team, are used to the mentality of team work and supporting one another, and that makes a huge difference.

Collegiate cheerleading provides athletes with many opportunities. A few of those include scholarships, local and often national recognition, traveling, networking, you name it. The possibilities are endless. So, just because your dream of playing college football didn't work out doesn't mean there's not something even better out there for you.

"My advice to guys just starting to cheer after playing on a competitive sports team is to go into it with an open mind and a positive attitude," says Lally. "Be modest when possible, and listen to what others who have been in your shoes have to say. Stay motivated and always be willing to learn something new. Do those things and you'll go a long way."