

Interviewer:

The day is Monday, April 18 2022. And it is 10:20pm. I am here interviewing a college athlete. Do you give me your consent to record this interview?

Interviewee 0:13

Yes, I give you consent.

Interviewer:

Okay. First off, what is your sport? And what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis as a student athlete.

Interviewee 0:24

I'm a school I played baseball. I'm a captain of the baseball team, I'm in my fifth year. And I'm a pitcher. Day to day. Usually in the mornings, I'm at class or doing classwork. The afternoons are a mix of class and baseball depending on the day. And then the evenings are pretty much always baseball practice with the team, you know, weight training, throwing, doing stuff as an entire team or in certain groups, also will have meetings with our coach, whether it's for something with the captains or as a full team. And then when we play games, that's usually on all day things. So some days are just game days where we would leave, go to the field in the morning, and come back to campus pretty late at night, usually. But day to day, that's usually what I'm doing.

Interviewer:

All right. When did you first learn about COVID-19? And what were your thoughts about it?

Interviewee 1:30

I first heard about COVID-19, kind of through scattered news reports and things in the fall semester 2018, when it was something that they would talk about in China. And it didn't really seem like a big deal. Obviously, when I saw the headlines, it would be a little worrying. Because, you know, anything unknown, like that can be a little scary. But I never really thought that it would come to impact us in the way that it did, mostly because it just seems so far away from us. And that I felt that there might be a good handle on it by the time it ever actually reached the side of the world. But yeah, that was the first time I really heard about it. And then I think it was very early in the spring semester of 2020. reports started coming that it was spreading. And you know, the tune changed a little bit. And that's when my attitude started to change. Initially, you know, from the first time hearing about it.

Interviewer:

How have your thoughts changed since then?

Interviewee 2:49

Well, I guess I kind of mentioned how they began to change. As that whole situation progressed through the spring, I think just like many people, I started a little bit dismissive of it. You know, there's a lot of competing and conflicting stories about you know, how severe it was, how many people were being infected. You know, hospitalization rates, death rates, all these different things, and every government was doing different things to try and stop the spread of it. So from, from when I first heard about it until now, it almost kind of came full circle, because right now, I feel that, you know, it's something that we should always keep a tab on. But I don't think that it will ever warrant the sort of

response that, you know, we gave it in the spring of 2020. But my opinions and thoughts definitely mirrored many people, you know, through the past couple years as new information has come out as debate and all these different things have have sort of circled around the topic.

Interviewer:

When did COVID First impact your sports season?

Interviewee 4:11

So far our sports season, be in a school in the northern us? We start our season traveling down south. And right before we started to make these trips down south, our athletic director actually called our team together. Because this was right after there had been a few just a very small amount of cases report in the US and it was still you know, not a lot of response from like the government level or the state level or anything like that. So basically, he laid out some guidelines, such as, you know, no shaking hands with other teams. Anyone who has any sort of cold cough or flu symptoms should, you know reports a trainer immediately and they'll probably have to, you know, come home. And at that point, basically, the message was go play, enjoy the trips, and when, but just be aware that this was going on. But it was never a really serious message, or it never really had any huge impact on our travel, or our actual gameplay. And, you know, our trip was taking place across the entire eastern seaboard. So we were crossing a lot of state lines doing a lot of things that, you know, what we didn't know is that in a few months, all these things would actually be outlawed. So it was it was kind of interesting that, you know, it started in that way.

Interviewer:

Where were you when you first found out that your school was shutting down due to COVID.

Interviewee 5:56

So we were actually in the middle of our trip during the school spring break. We were in Florida. And we had just finished a game. And we all went on our phones. And at that point, we were checking pretty regularly for updates, because all of our friends on other baseball teams were, you know, receiving messages from their schools that the season was canceled. You know, we had that talk with our ad. Other schools were having the same talk, but their talk was we are canceling your trip. We're canceling your season, we're sending you home. So that message came for us, actually, about in the middle of the week. And we finished the game check their phones that got the email from I believe the head of our school saying that initially, it was just that our our spring break had been extended, and that we were to return home and finish the rest of our spring break in our homes. And then hopefully we can return back to school after an extra week of spring break. Obviously, a few days later, we found out that our season, and our school, as far as in person was canceled. And we stayed home for the rest of the semester.

Interviewer:

What happened during and after you finding out about school shutting down? And what was the process of you getting home?

Interviewee 7:22

Yeah, so like I mentioned, we, we actually convinced our school to stay down for the duration that we had originally planned our spring break to be so as an extra three days. And we were able to play a

few extra games before coming back. Coming back, it was it was very, very interesting, because you know, we had to travel back from Florida up to the northeast us. And going through, you could just see how COVID was impacting every state to the point where, you know, we would have to stop at five or six gas stations in a certain city just to find cases of water for the team. Because we were traveling and and that that was kind of right in that time where the panic started to set in a little bit. And things like water, toilet paper, essentials were disappearing off shelf. So we really felt that and it was an interesting experience because we really felt how it was impacting the entire nation. Every place we stopped it was the same story. So we actually we stayed over one night, we were on a bus. So we drove up into you know about Georgia. And then we stayed at night in Georgia at a hotel which, you know, everyone was kind of staying away from each other but people needed to still travel. So it's an interesting, dynamic. And then we went all the way from Georgia, you know, it took about 14 or 15 hours to get back home. But we got home that night. And when we got back to school, there was a quite a bit a quite a big panic. We were all at school obviously. Because at the time when we are traveling back the students are in the process of leaving or coming and getting their stuff because there's during spring break. We were the only students on campus. And the ad basically begged us to go home because they didn't really know as a school, how they would take care of students during this time because the lockdowns were beginning places like dining hall, it was really very awkward because nobody you know, this was so early, no one really had masks or PPE, but they knew you know the severity of the virus. So just simple things like getting food or a You know, if you had a like a communal bathroom, all these things were just very tough and they want all students gone. So that's about the time that we all had to pack up and head home as soon as possible.

Interviewer:

When were you able to go back to school in person and play baseball?

Interviewee 10:20

So I'd say right around the time that most other schools did, you know, fall of 2020 was when we got to go back. And we shortly resume baseball after that, there's just a little period of time where they want to monitor, you know, everyone on campus and get everyone settled in. But fall of 2020, we're able to resume everything to a mostly normal point.

Interviewer:

How did being a student athlete look when you first went back in person.

Interviewee 11:01

So like I said, there was a point where the school just wanted to monitor the population, the caseload, all that stuff. Once we got past that point, they had to submit a plan to the state, basically outlining how athletes could practice and be together without spreading COVID. And there was actually quite a bit of politics and drama with getting this plan approved. Being a small school, there was this rush to get equipment and air purifiers, and all these different things we needed. And that was pretty tough, just with how high the demand was, and you know how little money the school had to work with. But they got to figure it out. And we started, we had to start in, in increments, where at first it was only a few people practicing in small groups, and then it slowly blended together until we were allowed to practice as an entire team. And if there ever was a COVID case on the team, we'd have to revert back to that first stage of small group practice. But luckily, we actually stayed COVID,

free for the fall semester. And that helped us get a lot of practices in. And we were one of the few teams in the country, I believe, to practice most of the fall in a very normal sense, minus, of course, the masks and other things like that. But we were able to play a lot of baseball in the fall.

Interviewer:

How has this changed to present time?

Interviewee 12:40

Yeah, so currently, right now, especially since the school is requiring vaccines for athletes, we are free of any really apparent COVID restrictions. I know there is still protocol in place if someone does test positive for COVID. But that test would only come from self reported symptoms. So they're taking a big step back. As far as regulation goes. And, you know, I came to college, pre COVID experienced it during COVID. And I would say right now we are very much back to that pre COVID feel as far as our routine and our schedule. And the the sanctions, as far as around practice really ended at the end of the spring semester 21 And then really ended the fall of 2022. or I'm sorry the spring of 2021 in the fall of 2021.

Interviewer:

Were there any concerns you had in regards to playing baseball during the COVID 19 pandemic?

Interviewee 14:03

Honestly, my biggest concern was that we weren't going to be able to baseball is one of those sports where contact is pretty limited. And we were we benefited from that fact because the conference we're in and the school governing body decided that we were like a medium risk sport. So we were able to do things a lot sooner than other sports, say football or wrestling. And that also helped to ease my mind as far as being in contact with other players from opposing schools. But even with the potential for contact, we also were only allowed to play schools that had a similar testing requirement to us. And we were tested three times a week at a minimum and within two only four hours of every game. So with a really robust testing regimen like that, we were all very confident that we could play without contracting COVID. And actually, during that first season back in the spring of 2021, we only had one COVID case on the team. And it was actually from a class exposure, not even from another athlete. So it just kind of proved that there wasn't a ton to worry about, because we were following the protocols. And our schools doing a good job of testing us and coordinating with other schools on testing.

Interviewer:

What does the future of college sports look like to you after the pandemic?

Interviewee 15:45

It looks very similar to pre COVID, I would say. But I also do think that the COVID pandemic era has brought about a lot of really interesting changes to come to my mind first, and I don't know how much this is really related to COVID. But with name, image likeness, being passed through during this era, you could say, that will be a lasting impact that I think will change college sports forever. And I think it's a great development for people in a position to take advantage of that legislation. Also, in a college to professional transition. drafts and you know, I'm mostly just talking about baseball. So the MLB draft, used to be 40 rounds, every team would have 40 turns to pick players

and over 1000, amateur players would ended up being drafted into professional baseball, while COVID In caused that draft to be chopped down to five rounds and 2020. And it only reached I believe, 2025 rounds in 2021. And now, people are realizing that you really didn't need 4040 rounds in the MLB draft. So it's looking like there might be a decrease in chances for professional sports, especially in baseball as things get more streamlined and less players are picked from college to go pro. So those are the two that come to mind. But I'm sure as years goes on, we will see this era, this 2020 to 2022 era of college sports play a really large role in impacting, you know, every institution every sport for for years to come