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# Staying With the Game Plan

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Ryane Adams

*Staying With the Game Plan*

Without a doubt the hardest school work that I have ever done in my life was in Biology 1230, my first semester at Xavier University. The immense amount of material, the hours of study, the arduous struggle to understand, and the Herculean effort to stay focused mandated that I develop new skills in a short period of time. Unquestionably, Biology 1230 marched me through paces that resulted in the fastest transformation I've experienced in my short life. In some measure, rigorous high school academics aided this rapid adaptation, but it was the application of life lessons learned through playing sports that truly helped me persevere while trying to survive not only first semester biology, but also my first semester as a college student.

For the majority of the semester, I looked at biology as a basketball game. When I played basketball, my coach always stressed that in the final seconds of a close game, a player usually reverts to a play, move, or shot that she is most comfortable with and has practiced the longest. He would say this to reinforce the idea that a player must continually prepare for the game, knowing that a game-time pressure situation will arise.

Extending the basketball analogy, I was losing by double digits after the first two quizzes. It seemed I was not preparing correctly, and I was nervous about the upcoming first major test. I thought about basketball. In high school, if I performed poorly in two games, then I would practice more, away from the high school court, so that I could be prepared for practice and the game. I took that theory and related it to biology. Since I didn't do well on my first two quizzes, and I had a big test coming up, I had to put in additional work, something more intense than usual. Two weekends before the exam I took out all my notes, opened the textbook, used Google, and I sat in the library from the time it opened until one in the morning. Like a big game against

a capable opponent, the upcoming test loomed dark and heavy on my mind. The possibility of performing poorly created a pressure situation, and in my pressure situation I reverted to what I was most comfortable and familiar with. In my case, those things were perseverance and dedication. My coach never settled for anything less than one hundred percent, nor did he accept failure as an option; therefore, neither did I. These values, imprinted on my psyche, showed up, like muscle memory in a basketball shot, and took over when the pressure was greatest.

When I got the grade back, I had scored ninety out of a hundred. Like a basketball player who makes a three-point shot just as time expires, I was proud of myself for all the hard work that I had put in to earn the grade I wanted. I considered that point in the semester as analogous to half-time of a game. I had discovered the strategy that worked against the opponent, and now I had only to refine it. For the next quizzes and tests, I was better prepared because I had found my working system. In preparing for tests, I stayed with my system, ran the play as designed, and things worked out perfectly. I was able to stay afloat and focused for the rest of the semester, until the end of the game.

Looking back, my transition into college was a more arduous experience than I expected. Biology, in particular, gave me a quick and drastic wake-up call. The life lessons I had learned playing basketball were the greatest help in my success in biology. The life lesson of perseverance was key. I am glad I had such a challenging time at the beginning of the semester because I now know that with effort and determination, I can accomplish anything. In Biology 1230, I learned that hard work and strong willpower take one much further than knowledge alone ever will.