Beyond the Scoreboard: Why athletic success matters for Iowa State

Have you been in the crowd for an Iowa State athletics game over the past few seasons? If so, you know firsthand how exciting it is to be a Cyclone fan today. Between sold-out stands, dramatic wins and beloved coaches with big personalities, passion for Iowa State athletics has never been higher – and the university’s exposure through athletics has never been greater.

Since Jamie Pollard became athletics director in 2005, Iowa State has risen from an average finish of 115th in the Directors’ Cup standings, a measure of overall athletics success, to 41st last year. Iowa State made those gains with the smallest budget in the Big 12 Conference.

Does this type of success matter? A 2012 University of California–Berkeley study concludes that it does, particularly in big-time sports. The study found that winning games leads to increases in alumni donations to athletics, enhances a school’s academic reputation, sparks an increase in student applications, and triggers a rise in incoming SAT scores.

“Students and their parents want to be associated with successful people,” said women’s volleyball coach Christy Johnson-Lynch. “So when they see Iowa State athletics doing well, when you see good publicity surrounding athletics, people want to be associated with that.”

Head women’s basketball coach Bill Fennelly notes that often, someone’s first contact with Iowa State is through athletics. They see thousands of fans tailgating before a football game or feel the energy at a basketball game in Hilton Coliseum.

Demographics and efforts to reach youngsters have Pollard and his staff optimistic about future success for Cyclone athletics. With more Iowa high school graduates attending Iowa State than any other college or university, and more Iowa State graduates living in Iowa, potentially those numbers mean more fans, ticket buyers and donors.

The momentum goes both ways. Membership in the Junior Cyclone Club has increased from 2,000 youngsters to 5,500 during Pollard’s tenure. If kids get excited about Iowa State early, it’s more likely they’ll become students at the university.

“In my 18 years, I’ve never seen Iowa State in a better position,” Fennelly said. “I’m talking about public perception, the mood, the demeanor, the way people walk around campus. Athletics gives people a chance to wear their colors – all that stuff that builds a sense of pride and identity. And that’s a good thing.”
Raising the Grade

Athletes at Iowa State generally face more demands than most students – maintaining their grades to stay eligible while balancing their academic responsibilities with practices, meetings, games and travel.

Staff at the Rod and Connie French Athletic Academic Center help them keep those priorities in line, support that is critical, says basketball player Brynn Williamson, especially for freshmen.

“Time management was really a big challenge coming in,” she says. “But you have the best people behind you helping you. It took me a semester or two, but after that, I was pretty good.”

Good enough for Academic All-Big 12 second team.

“Our student-athletes have very demanding schedules, and we strive to help them achieve balance in their lives,” says David Harris, senior associate athletics director for academic services. “Our ultimate goal is for them to graduate and go on to successful careers in their chosen profession.”

The result: Iowa State student-athletes have compiled a higher grade-point average than the overall student body seven of the last eight semesters, with a graduation rate that puts Iowa State third in the Big 12.

Now that’s really something to cheer for.

Iowa State Student-Athletes at a Glance
(2012-13 academic year)

| 2.94 cumulative athletic GPA | 27% of student-athletes were above a 3.5 GPA | 41 perfect 4.0 GPAs |
| 30,000+ hours were logged by student athletes in the Hixson-Lied Student Success Center from August 2012 to December 2012 |

Ames, Iowa

ranked fifth on Lumosity’s 2013 list of “America’s Smartest Cities.”
Field Camp of Dreams

Each summer since 1957, Iowa State geology majors have journeyed to Wyoming's Big Horn Mountains, spending six weeks at the Carl F. Vondra Geology Field Station, where they put classroom learning into practice. Just a day's drive across South Dakota, the area's young mountains, arid climate and sparse vegetation make the western terrain a geoscientist's paradise.

It's a unique experience that really brings geology to life in a way no textbook can. "There is absolutely no substitute for this style of education, and the result is a truly transformative learning experience," said Neil Iverson, professor and Smith Family Foundation Departmental Chair in Geology.

For many, one visit isn't enough; the first reunion was held in 2002, and alumni, faculty, family members and friends have continued to return in droves ever since. But alumni not only come back, they also give back.

Two such alumni are Tom Smith, classes of 1968 and 1967, and Evonne Smith, class of 1968, who want to ensure the camp continues to place Iowa State's geology program among the best in the nation. The greatest need was improving the woefully outdated facilities, which included four buildings recycled from a World War II internment camp. The couple's most recent commitment will help support student living quarters, establish an on-site staff position, and endow a maintenance fund. As Tom Smith explained, "I have wonderful memories, but more important, I have a profound interest in the camp's future."

Geology alumni are pleased with the plans to modernize the facilities for today's students while maintaining its rustic integrity.

"It was my field camp experience that gave me the knowledge and the tools to move ahead in life after Iowa State," said Kevin Connolly, class of 1987. "Something about this place, this camp, gets under your skin and never lets go of you.)
Welcome to **YOUR IOWA STATE**, the newsletter that keeps you connected with Iowa State University. Look inside to find out what’s happening on campus as well as to relive some of your own Iowa State memories.

**THE EVOLUTION OF CY**

Iowa State’s beloved mascot has undergone some dramatic makeovers in nearly 60 years on campus. Which of Cy’s looks do you best remember from your days at Iowa State?

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**SIDEKICK CLONE**

WAS INTRODUCED at a men’s basketball game in the 1980s