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**Canadian Women's Soccer Student-Athletes' Perceptions of the NCAA
Experience**

by

Dan Carle



A thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

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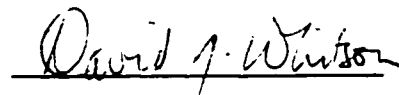
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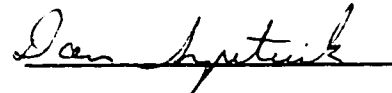
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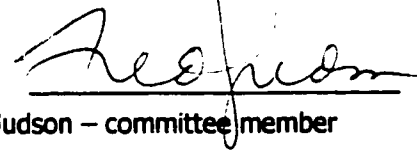
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Dr. David Whitson - supervisor 9/15/99



Dr. Dan Syrotuik – committee member



Dr. Fred Judson – committee member

Abstract

Canadian student-athletes choosing to attend university and participate in intercollegiate sport is not a new phenomenon. However, opportunities to do so are available to young Canadians in increasing numbers, especially in the area of female athletics. Intercollegiate women's soccer programs, in particular, are benefiting from the legislated implementation of Title IX, and young Canadian women's soccer players increasingly have the option of attending an NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) institution on a sports scholarship. This results not only in an athletic talent drain from Canada, but also to a perception among some Canadian student-athletes that the CIAU (Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union) is comparatively inferior. The philosophical differences between the two intercollegiate sport systems result in stark differences in operation, which in turn affect perceptions. This thesis is a qualitative analysis of the decisions and motivations of a select group of Canadian women athletes who pursued the NCAA option, and their reflections on their American experience. Their thoughts are reported and augmented by analyses of differences between the two intercollegiate sport systems.

This thesis examines privileges and entitlements enjoyed by intercollegiate athletes in the United States and contrasts educational and coaching philosophies between the respective intercollegiate systems, in addition to addressing broader cultural differences that were experienced by the subjects. Lessons are drawn about the attractions the American system can have, as well as the structural difficulties it can lead to.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an interview-based study on the experience of Canadian women's soccer athletes who chose to play soccer and attend university on full or partial scholarship in the United States. The National Collegiate Athletic Association is the principal governing body of American college sport. I am motivated by several questions: Why did these athletes choose to leave Canada in pursuit of sport in the United States? How (aggressively) were these opportunities pursued? What were the main factors in choosing the United States? Did their thoughts and perceptions about the nature and quality of university sport in Canada affect their motivation? Were they influenced by the presence of American college sport on television? Did the reality of their situation correspond to their perceptions, meet their expectations? I am attempting to understand the life, thoughts, and choices of the Canadian women's soccer athlete in choosing a scholastic and athletic path south of the Canadian border.

The college/interuniversity sport system in the United States is attracting talent across many borders while the Canadian interuniversity system generally does not. NCAA rosters appear to represent the United Nations, in sports like college basketball, while Canadian rosters principally represent Canada. There are simple reasons for this. The fact remains these out-flows are of concern to Canadian university sport administrators. This group, though, is not in a position – politically, then financially - to curb the exodus due to fundamental differences between the respective interuniversity athletic programs across the longest unprotected border in the world. The superior funding available to American university athletic departments, in turn, reflects philosophical differences about the purposes and functions of university sport.

1.2 CANADIAN UNIVERSITY SPORT

This study recognizes one significant shortcoming. Canadian university sport - its state, its operation, its difficulties, and its solutions - has garnered little research attention (even in Canada) and thus lacks data to any significant degree. Because "An adequate treatment of school (university) sport in Canada remains to be written" (Hall et. al., 210) I write this section deferring to the limited citations available. I also draw on nine seasons of full-time experience as an athletic public relations manager at the University of Alberta in attempting to explain the landscape of Canadian university sport.

University athletics in Canada and college athletics – as it is called - in the United States are differentiated primarily on two fronts: money, and in the relationship of sport and education. In contrast to the American system of athletic scholarship, where educational and living costs are accounted for, Canadian student-athletes, for the most part, pay to play. Universities in Canada are places of education first, for all students in all disciplines, including sport. School comes first in Canada, regardless of discipline. In the United States, this does not appear to be the case. There are few entitlements, "perks", which come with being a Canadian university student or student-athlete. The "perk" typically comes in the form of a degree, which Canadian athletes earn with much more regularity than their American intercollegiate counterparts (Chu 1985; Sage 1979; Schaaf 1995). Canadian student-athletes pay tuition, books, and typically are required to provide personal money to supplement equipment/exhibition travel costs, in order to play.

Another important distinction: the Canadian university system is neither – from either the internal-campus perspective or as viewed by the external community - a business or mass spectator product. Philosophically, it is an extra-curricular option available to those students with specialized skills, like a drama club, only requiring a greater time commitment.

University sport is sanctioned by the school and subsidized through institutional insurance, facility use and conference travel. In Canada, though, the system is not about making great athletes - it is a system designed to provide experiential opportunity to young people.

The benefits are more personal than institutional, more for the athlete than from the university, coming in the "learning experiences" the university provides and not in the public benefit the athlete conveys (Dryden, 12).

In this system Canadian university athletic directors have little real power and, as a result, operate mostly from a perspective of advocacy. Their lobby efforts – for support, be it financial or human, and involving typically either sponsors or senior university administration – are necessary because these executive sport administrators are mandated to work within the mission statement of their larger university. Across Canadian university campuses, this mission reinforces an education-first viewpoint; this places limits on all programs in one form or another. Within athletic administration there are also restrictions, pertaining to, among other things, athletic recruiting, fund-raising, and academic accountability. Without the voice of the athletic director around large institutional resource debate tables, Canadian university sport might well be recreational. Nonetheless, Canadian athletic directors know they do not have, within the larger framework of education, dedicated hard budgets for all programs or either the political or economic clout to sanction CIAU sport as spectator entertainment:

...revenue generation is not a major issue in our intercollegiate program. Current gate receipts cover only a fraction of the intercollegiate program itself. We would welcome additional revenue, but are not prepared to compromise our view that the major beneficiaries of the intercollegiate program should be the athletes themselves (Connell in A.W. Taylor, 20).

The university athletic system in Canada is about providing high-level participation opportunity for individuals within its system. It is not about providing events for crowds. As

a result, game-day ticket lines are not necessary in order to meet its stated bottom line. It is not a spectator product to any significant degree. It is not typically the biggest game in town. It is often just a game. The reality is Canadian university sport does not enjoy the perception of being elite in sport society. This view is shared to a degree inside university bureaucracies (the only mechanism by which decisions are made) where debates linger as to the benefits of even offering university sport programs, and all matters related to program costs in the athletic area. University sport is a bureaucratic arm like other ancillary university service, meaning red tape is often long and political positioning is essential. The Canadian university sport system, as viewed by those externally, appears to be sport played by the smart, which is a different perception than sport played by the best. Stringent, non-negotiable, academic entrance requirements at many Canadian schools have placed clear restraints on available student-athletes. Athletes are mandated to make the grade before they can be Canadian student-athletes. This situation is problematic for those with talent but on the outer fringe of academic acceptance, but universities typically do not bend.

There are, though, cases of abuse, like any large public (or private, for that matter) system:

Infractions of these principles are not unknown, but they have tended to be in some of the smaller universities where a winning tradition in basketball, hockey, or football has become a spectator draw in towns without professional sport (Hall et. al., 207).

The nature and frequency of these infractions are not known because universities clearly bury such facts, if they exist, and because the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) – Canada's university sport governing body – faces the same lack of resources as universities. This means, among other things, dedicated human resources to scour schools are not available. The Canadian system is largely honor-based with schools expected to be ethical and uphold trust, and the mantra: education first. The end result is that all Canadian university athletes must make the grade.

Once university admission has been granted there are mechanisms for Canadian athletes to receive scholarships, but not in the manner (or size) of their American counterparts. Scholarships in Canada are not issued purely on the basis of athletic talent. All scholarship monies in Canada have academic components, which must be met. Canadian university student-athletes can make money and attend university, but for this the student must display academic achievement in addition to athletic skill. In Canada, structurally, the opportunity to play varsity sport is thought to be a privilege:

The athlete might not get the perks that he or she expects from being a varsity athlete, but being able to do what you love and in the course of doing learn so much and make so many friends at so little cost, is a life-long reward...It is the balance between privilege and entitlement, and the attitude that results, which are important. (Dryden, 21).

Canadian student-athletes, by the number willing to play, seem unscathed by the education-first paradigm, and though they hold a somewhat elite position by gaining entrance to university, they are living examples of the rules. However, these athletes may not understand that Canadian interuniversity athletics is not a system-for-profit. It costs money. These athletes, and others like them, may also not understand that any university athletic career lasts a maximum of five seasons, ignoring for the moment the prospect of career-ending injury, which is a very real concern. Many athletic careers end up a small fraction of a life. This fact guides Canadian universities in its decisions relative to its athletes. Canadian university sport is not so much about the rapid development and marketing of its athletes and programs for purposes of profit, but about the development and education of the individual, ensuring the university experience is not solely about sport, but resonates with the acquisition of knowledge and communication skills through education. These longer-term goals may not be understood by student-athletes in Canada, athletes who see and

hear (and experience) the cultural reverence America has for its collegiate and professional sports stars. Some Canadian athletes feel by staying in Canada they are missing a "true" university sport experience. However, in some cases, not far behind the shine of many of the stories on American college sport lie confirmation of exaggerations, falsifications and fabrications. Some of these stories do personify the American Dream. Many stories, though, are never told. Canadian universities are above-board and unflinching in their statement of purpose: academic skill acquisition for application throughout life. This fact may not make sense to a 19-year-old who thinks the world is unfair because it is not at her (or his) feet solely because they possess athletic skill. The ability to score in Canadian universities is sanctioned only if it involves legitimate passing grades.

Canadian University sport is but one part of larger university financial tensions, which occur over scarce resources. Athletic directors themselves are in competition with other university faculties and departments – including central administration – for money and support. There are other tensions, such as debate between budget and facility needs of competitive athletes and those of recreational student users. In Canada, one school of thought suggests the elimination of university sport – perceived to be an elite option – in order to enhance campus recreation programs and general sport programs for the student body.

The student-athlete to student ratio is approximately 10 per cent within Canadian universities. Yet, at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, varsity sports consumed 70 per cent of the Athletics and Recreation budget (Dryden 1997). With financial scarcity as one undercurrent and questions like 'what is the benefit of providing elite sport?' on the other, advocates of university sport in Canada are often on the defensive. Non-elite athletes are

asking questions while university sport administrators face challenges of maintaining programs and developing new funding streams.

Towards those ends, University athletic departments and sport programs are now faced with situations of soliciting sponsorships and donations for survival, and generating more operating funds from students through athletic service fees. Some of this money is used to renew or maintain often run-down and over-used facilities (many athletic facilities on the campuses of Canada are 20 or 30 years old). Corporate Canada is slow to provide support, not least because Canadian university sport – institutionally and nationally - does not employ the human resources needed for corporate bargaining - solicitations, meetings, agreements, business transactions, and negotiation. Students in the larger university/academic community have concern over funding university sport through student athletic fees, since they generally do not attend games. University sport has little, if any, bearing on many functions of their life, yet they are asked to pay (Dryden 1997).

SUMMARY

It is no coincidence the word "student" comes before "athlete" in describing those who compete as university athletes in Canada. The entire university system, of which athletics holds a prominent, though still ancillary, position, is founded upon values of education and education-first. It is a system concerned with the development of the individual, not the marketing of the individual. This is mandated, legislated and reinforced. Profiteering is not prevalent within post-secondary athletics in Canada. With few exceptions, there are generally few entitlements that come with being an athlete at a Canadian university. Student-athletes, those eligible, must earn and maintain this eligibility through conventional means, like other non-athletic students.

Financial concerns are also pivotal. The institutions of Canada have neither the motivation nor money to hire specialized professionals, to keep them when they develop, or to aggressively market its athletic programs. Athletic departments also cannot give money in the form of scholarship to existing or prospective student-athletes on the basis of current or future athletic potential, only. All endowments to athletes follow adherence to hard academic components. In Canada student-athletes are required to be accountable students in order to remain athletes. This is not always the case in the NCAA. The Canadian system is concerned less with creating world-class or professional athletes than with providing experience, lessons and life skills – discipline, dedication, and responsibility. The system continues in spite of skeleton staff structures. Canadian university sport, for individuals involved on either athletic or administrative fronts, is about passion, because benefits of the experience cannot be expressed monetarily, either for athletes or the athlete's school. Also, experiences in Canadian university sport rarely lead to professional sport opportunities. It is not a sport development system geared for the pros. In many respects it marks the end of sport development. For many, it is the last opportunity to compete before real adulthood, with its own competitive pressure, begins. Canadian university sport is a simple system of experience and education.

1.3 AMERICAN COLLEGE SPORT

Conversely, there are several complexities (and oddities) to the American college sport system. The NCAA sport system is similar to Canada's only from the perspective that both depend upon university environments for support and use university students as their representatives. Differences in philosophy, in operation, in size, including money and numbers, make it the most elaborate college athletic sport system in the world. Unlike

Canada, the elite in the NCAA might more aptly be described athlete-students than student-athletes.

The differences between University athletics in the United States and Canada are also manifested on two fronts: money and education. In America, the distinction seems to involve a lot more of one (money) and not so much of the other (education). Games across borders are scored the same, but packaged so much differently.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is the overarching governing body of American college sport. It is an office with money, profile, and problems in athletics well beyond Canadian comparison. The system all begins with the frenzied competition to sign the best high school athletes to National Letters of Intent - the principal document that binds high school athletes to one school, only, after a detailed and ritualistic process of courting. This process can include expense-paid trips to campuses, letters, and phone calls. This annual flurry predicates the notion of NCAA experience as entitlement:

...in the United States, those who play on a "major" university team are perceived to bring glory to the school and money to its box office and endowment fund. In return, they can expect certain benefits: a scholarship, some leniency on course loads and on conflicts over assignment deadlines, tests and exams; state-of-the-art facilities; equipment and travel paid for by the university; the best practice times. (Dryden, 12)

High level Division One athletes, and those throughout the NCAA, enjoy many of these privileges. However, their sense of entitlement develops largely from institutional "perks" because universities are keenly aware of the fact that without its athletes, its big-league programs could not make big league money. Its athletes, formerly unpaid journeymen who cannot legally benefit financially or materially from their collegiate experience, are its source of profit. Since any business likes to control its profit, what do you suppose college sport

endeavors to control? Scholarship leads to feelings of privilege, but it also seems to create situations of ownership:

The well-known downside to this is that scholarship athletes at American universities are apt to be treated as if they were semi-professional athletes...the norm is that the athlete is an employee. (Hall et. al, 205).

The structure of scholarship and the notion of paid student athletes on the basis of athletic skill alone are unique to the American college system. This fact accentuates another of the exceptional characteristics of American college sport.

The NCAA is, in many cities, the only or certainly the biggest game in town, out-drawing professional sport in many cities in both media coverage and profile. Major Division One NCAA college events are attended by thousands of fans and watched on network television by tens of thousands, even ten of millions for big games. The money involved in such large events makes them not just sport, but spectacles, unrivalled even in the American professional ranks. This profile and corresponding profits places education as a secondary or tertiary responsibility.

Education does not appear to be a priority in the NCAA – fewer than half of the students who enter a four-year university as freshmen ever receive their degrees (Chu 1989; Schaaf 1995; Thelin 1994) – and is a problem endemic to the particular way American higher education is financed and administered. This reflects a philosophy of sport-as-business within institutions ostensibly devoted to higher education.

Some athletes on those teams may be in school only to get the coaching needed to stay competitive in amateur Olympic sports (such as in swimming, track and field, volleyball, wrestling, rowing, etc.) or to become draft prospects in professional sports (such as baseball, basketball, football and hockey)...Now there are major corporations who sponsor media coverage of intercollegiate events for advertising purposes. These corporations have little or no interest in the academic development of athletes. (Coakley, 403).

Student-athletes in Canada buy products, they do not sell them. They are athletes, generally, who go to school, who pay for that school, who are respected but not praised because of their athletic skill. Student-athletes in the United States are not just student-athletes – some are stars, visible, some have profile, many are aristocrats among their fellow students. They are the beneficiaries of “gifts”, and they are entertainers, if for no other reason than corporate-through-to-common America’s willingness to put its money behind sport and sport stars. The idea, at least in the big-ticket sports, is to provide the opportunity to see “tomorrow’s stars today” before they “jump” to professional sports, which in many cases seems more like a playful skip. College sport can be that big:

When media rights to games are sold, the academic progress of the college players often becomes less important than television ratings and network profits...This problem is intensified by the fact that many decisions affecting intercollegiate sport are made by people having nothing to do with higher education. Instead, they are experts in marketing, accounting, business management, and the media. I call this “corporatization”, and I see it as a major problem in intercollegiate sports (Ibid, 413-414).

Coakley, citing the Knight Foundation Commission’s recommendations, suggests profit limits be set among schools, then shared, in order to achieve equity. This prospect is not likely, however, if Notre Dame economist Richard G. Sheehan is correct. Sheehan concludes no fewer than three college football programs – Notre Dame, Florida and Michigan - are each “worth more than the Detroit Lions.” (Associated Press, October 5, 1997). The business, marketing and money behind such programs would logically skew educational goals.

American college sport is able to generate excitement, in part, due to large infrastructure. As Coakley points out, institutions tend to employ exponentially larger media relations and marketing personnel to publicize their programs. Coaches at larger Division One schools have their own television programs, and are stars in their own right.

The Division One business starts with gifts – the carrots associated with scholarships, in hopes of enticing the best athletes. The NCAA system is scholarship-based, with athletic-only endowment money available from largely private sources, including television and marketing revenues. It is the contributions of private sources, “boosters” as they are known, which further underscore the difference between the two nations’ college sport programs. A simple example: In Canada moms and dads make chili for sale at their kids’ games. In America the owner of the chili factory could well give hundreds of thousands of dollars to an athletic program, because college sport and its success are greater in profile from the perspective of cultural significance. This culture, and its significance, are driven by boosters. Boosters, many of whom are alumni, are loyalists - large groups of supporters who, in America, rally behind everything from high school pep bands to high profile college athletic programs. Boosters contribute money, time, resources, and emotion. Boosters, and the economic system they maintain, are not necessarily above-board:

Most athletic foundations through which such funds flow are not legally part of the university so that public access to such data is limited...At many schools excess capacity exists in classes, dormitories and food production that the marginal costs of providing these services to athletes is very low. Yet most institutions cost these services close to the dollar value paid by an average student. In a similar vein, the revenue generated from athletic events is often allocated to some other budgetary unit in the university...For these and other reasons...accurate financial data on the NCAA and its members are hard to uncover (Fleisher, Goff and Tollison, 73-74).

At its base, revenue seems to drive the economy – and the philosophy of its programs - within the NCAA. As an example, several universities publish documents titled: “What Boosters Need to Know About NCAA Rules and Regulations,” detailing the do-and-don’ts of dealing with student-athletes. Boosters cannot say more than “hello” to prospective student-athletes, cannot make telephone calls or write letters to student-athletes, and cannot aid the recruiting process with incentives of any kind. Legally they are bound; behaviorally they

appear boundless. Although the NCAA, and the media, are formally required to monitor payments to players and other incentives/enticements to athletes within American college sport, this does not deter boosters from offering "perks" of various kinds. These "perks" are illegal but pervasive. Three examples:

- A Miami-based Associated Press story from 1994: "A University of Miami sports official says bargain housing deals given to football players who rented from boosters made it tough for him to maintain compliance and was partially responsible for his resignation.
- March 3, 1998, Associated Press story titled NCAA Widens Probe of Purdue Basketball: "The NCAA is widening its investigation of Purdue's basketball program, looking into possible recruiting violations and improper conduct by boosters."
- November 6, 1997, Associated Press story from Lubbock, Texas titled Bondsman rebuts NCAA Allegations: "A bail bondsman cited by the NCAA for providing free or reduced-costs services to Texas Tech athletes said Wednesday he cooperated fully with investigators and believes he'll be exonerated."

SUMMARY

American college sport and Canadian university sport share similarities insofar as both sport systems are affiliated with post-secondary institutions. From this point there opens a gap, which quickly widens. In America there is a lot more money and people and people with money driving the system. The large cash figures associated with scholarship and earmarked for sponsorship put the American college sport programs beyond financial comparisons with Canada. American college sport also has difficulties that come with large infusions of capital and a competitive recruiting system seemingly bent on attracting the best talent to the biggest schools in the biggest sports by any means. These actions, and the disarmingly low graduation rates, call into question the purposes of American college athletics, and whether commercial entertainment and sports development agendas can be reconciled within the purposes and framework of universities. Universities everywhere should be about higher learning. This leads to one fundamental question which some

stateside academics and administrators ask, between games: What is the purpose, what is the point? Is the purpose to make money, produce professional athletes, and create obvious division among students? Is the purpose to sanction bad behavior and shady practices in the interest of profit, reputation and profile? Is the purpose to teach students? And what does the current system teach them? The answers are complex. There are numerous factors, which drive the American college system, not least economic benefits through sweeping media and financial support, which may all appear to contravene the purposes of higher education. Due to pro-like practice times and facilities, student-athletes in America face greater challenges and pressures in the athletic arena, which Canadian student-athletes rarely do. They enjoy entitlements in areas Canadian student-athletes do not, beginning with free education. The value of that education, however, is in question.

One fact remains consistent despite the differences: on fall Saturdays and spring weekends the arenas and stadiums of America will be packed and the cameras will be rolling – rolling out the red carpet for a new game of the week and rolling on with the status quo. The networks, the sponsors and the boosters do not seem to question the value of the American college sport system. In fact, they increase its value, in monetary terms, meaning change becomes more conceptual and unlikely.

The intercollegiate sport dichotomy between the United States and Canada is stark. One system provides no money for athletes, requires its athletes to pay for themselves, and requires them to play for themselves in old or over-used buildings in front of few people and no television audience. The other system offers free education, status, class scheduling changes to suit sport, academic leniency, a program which is not in competition with or questioned by campus recreation, and in some schools large crowds, large media support and a large presence on network television.

1.4 TELEVISION AND POSSIBLE MEDIA EFFECTS

I am a child of televised American college sport. I felt a measure of euphoria watching big American college games, the system which I now understand portrays accomplished collegiate sport figures as stars, larger than life, and collegiate sport fans - their supporters - as loyally rabid (Eastman 1994). I was an athlete whose dream was ultimately larger than talent. I recall being enthralled by the largeness of American college sport on television, wanting to be a part of that system, if only for a moment; just to feel what it would be like to be a star, to be revered. This perspective guided my interest in wondering whether watching American college sport television influenced the perception (s) of Canadian women's soccer athletes.

Contemporary culture is a mediated culture. College sport is mediated culture. The multi-channel universe is filled with entertainment, sports and news options in number and variety depicted as science fiction only a short time ago. The changing world is expressed through ever-changing television. The diversity of this world is expressed through the diversity available at click of the changing channel. Still, the effects on a mediated society, if indeed there are any, are both subjective and contentious. The debate continues as to how (or by how much) television influences society.

The process is controversial for a number of reasons, not least being a debate of non-reciprocal intimacy building a celebrity culture. This perspective introduces the phenomenon of the "fan" – the individual who lives vicariously through the struggles and triumphs of the mediated "hero". Communication flows only one-way.

...Individuals can create and establish a form of intimacy, which is essentially non-reciprocal. It is this new form of mediated, non-reciprocal intimacy, stretched across time and space, which underlies, for example, the relationship between fan and star. It can be exhilarating, precisely because it is freed from the reciprocal obligations characteristic of face-to-face interaction. But it can also become a form of dependence

in which individuals come to rely on others whose very absence and inaccessibility turn them into an object of veneration (Thompson, 208).

The other fact seems to be that American television is difficult, if not impossible, to escape anywhere in Canada.

More American television programming is available to the vast majority of Canadians than is Canadian programming. On most private radio stations, more American material is available to listeners than Canadian material. On virtually all magazine racks in Canada more American magazines are available to the reader than Canadian magazines, in spite of the fact that over 200 magazines are published in Canada. More American authors are read by the average Canadian school child than Canadian authors. And on the story goes. Our proximity to the U.S. and the resultant spillover of American cultural products comprise a major factor to be taken into account in considering Canada's communications environment (Lorimer, McNulty, 1991, 56).

What effect do these out-numbered communication tools have on the thoughts of Canadian athletes towards sport in America?

Some suggest the entertainment industry is how the United States maintains global (perceived) control as a superpower (Turow 1997); other arguments suggest television has transformed sport (Rader 1984); while others suggest a mutually beneficial relationship between sport and the mass media based upon high economic returns (Greendorfer 1983). All of these propositions have at least some basis in fact. However, what is indisputable is that the reach of television, and televised sports, is greater now than at any point in history, and that unprecedented Canadian audiences now watch American college and professional sport events.

Television, and possibly other media as well, ...contribute to consensus through their hidden advocacy of dominant symbols, especially to those groups whose passivity and heavy exposure to television contribute to an unconscious assimilation of dissonant messages, even in circumstances where the structural supports for dominant values is weak. The uses of media reflect, resemble, reinforce and

sometimes displace the different authority patterns experienced at work and in the community (Piepe, 164).

Television seeks to, and often succeeds, in creating "live" events that draw distant audiences to "feel the excitement." But do these audiences "feel" it? Does television influence? It seems not, at least directly:

... when we speak of media impact or of the media causing something to happen, we do not mean to suggest that the media by themselves are a sufficient cause. Anything as complex as human behavior is not shaped by one factor alone; each behavior usually has been caused by a set of factors (Becker, Roberts, 507).

Canadian women's soccer student-athletes, at least the group who participated in this study, suggest the American media's priority given to the production and distribution of sport and the attention given by American media towards sport and athletes were factors in their decision to leave Canada. However, following Becker and Roberts, it was not the only factor.

Though discussing the influence of the media on ones' life may rest somewhere outside ones' experience, the athletes, for the most part, knew what I was asking about. They certainly did not appear to be the mindless drones of early media theory, but rather expressed an engagement in that which they watched. Engagement is one concept, effect is another. The answer to whether or not watching American college sport television influenced the decision of Canadian women's soccer athletes in deciding to pursue sport and education in the United States is complex. However, it is a question worth posing if only from the perspective of raising awareness of the increasingly diverse power of television and the grip it has on contemporary attitudes and perceptions. While television effects cannot adequately be proven, television's influence is ubiquitous. American television – and American sport television – are everywhere in Canada.

1.5 WHY WOMEN'S SOCCER?

NCAA women's soccer is closer in many ways to CIAU women's soccer than other NCAA programs would be to their Canadian equivalents. There exist greater program similarities across and between intervarsity women's soccer programs in Canada and in the United States. The similarities include relative institutional administrative and program support, relative priority within the athletic program, comparable fan/crowd sizes, and similar (lack of) university and community profile. For the most part, women's soccer is not a flagship program for any North American university sport program. The program costs, crowd sizes and administrative support are roughly similar, unlike the differences between Canadian and American university/college football or basketball. As a result, women's soccer athletes on both sides of the border (with the exception of Mia Hamm) are not stars, they are people. This study is told by people who supported this project most by honestly speaking to it. There was no arrogance. I am not entirely confident I would have received the same heartfelt sentiment from a first-line hockey centre or major college quarterback.

Another factor in my choice was that the Club and provincial soccer systems of Canada, which play essentially year-round, serve as an excellent feeder for the NCAA. This allows NCAA scouts and recruiters to watch prospective athletes play in game competition, which does not appear to be as readily available in the United States. Club soccer is comparatively non-existent in the United States. The Club and provincial soccer system of Canada is highly competitive, particularly in preparation for large national tournaments like the Canada Games or Club nationals. These experiences keep athletes game-ready and focussed, giving recruiters a better sense of athletic character.

The options available to Canadian women's soccer student-athletes have also expanded, in part, because of Title IX, the 1972 American charter of the Education

Amendments which states athletic programs must be financially and administratively balanced between men's and women's programs (Boxill 1993-1994; Francis 1993-1994). In 1988 the legislation was reinvigorated (Shaw 1995) and it continues to be controversial (Francis op.cit.; Simon 1993-1994; Staurowsky 1996). However, whatever the tensions, the charter has resulted in greater collegiate participation for females and women's soccer has been one of the prime beneficiaries (Rayfield 1996).

Women's soccer programs, unlike others, which depend upon large infrastructure, administrative and financial supports in order to operate, are at the bottom end of the cost continuum. As a result, many institutions looking to balance the gender scales, at least at the level of perception, are quick to add low-maintenance women's soccer teams with their relatively low roster numbers, equipment costs, and facility needs. The result is that:

...in 14 years (1981-1995) the number of NCAA women's soccer programs has grown tremendously, from 77 to 617, a growth of over 700 per cent that is unmatched by any other collegiate sport. Yes, there are more programs, more scholarships and more opportunities for the up-and-coming young female soccer players (Rayfield, 23).

The implementation of Title IX has produced a vast number of women's Division One soccer programs. In 1997 there existed 211 universities in the United States that sponsored NCAA Division One soccer (<http://www.NCAA.org>). Canadian talent has filled some of the increased need. By contrast, the CIAU women's soccer situation is stable, and unchanged. It supports 37 programs within its 47 institutions.

1.6 OUTLINE OF FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

This chapter has attempted to explain the range of philosophical and operational differences between the college sport delivery systems in the United States and Canada. In addition, this chapter attempted to explain the concept of media influence and television power, and why Canadian women's soccer student-athletes are this study's focus.

Chapter two will explain the sample of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes who chose to participate in the American college sport system, in addition to outlining the methodology and methodological choices in this qualitative research endeavor. Chapter three will present the thoughts of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes. Chapter four will analyze these thoughts using a thematic grouping of six common sentiments. Chapter five will conclude and summarize.

Chapter Two

2.1 Research Design

The purpose of this dissertation is to capture the thoughts, context and experience of individual Canadian women's soccer athletes in choosing to attend university and play in the United States college system. The athletes of this dissertation were each active agents in deciding to leave Canada, to study and to play interuniversity sport in a completely new environment, and in some cases a completely new culture.

I sought Canadian women's soccer student-athletes within four research categories (first time in NCAA, returning to NCAA, those who quit, those who graduated) with varying degrees of success. I became aware of these athletes through several contacts amassed during full-time work within the CIAU. Specifically, Tracy David, the head coach of the University of Alberta Pandas, and Neil Turnbull, then head coach of the Canadian National Women's soccer team, provided suggestions, insights, advice and names as this research idea percolated from idea to operation. Though I was unable to implement my plan of having equally represented groups, in terms of sample size and home region, the experience of each participant successfully provides different views from those who walked similar paths. The articulation of these sentiments, and the lessons they hold, has consistently guided me.

The Canadian student-athletes number 14 and are grouped into four distinct sub-categories. In seven of these cases I charted the interuniversity experience throughout one athletic and academic season. The sample of Canadian women's

soccer student-athletes are from all regions of the country - West Coast, Prairie, Central, Atlantic – and ranged in age from 19 to 27.

The athletes who participated in this study each possess grounded knowledge and experience within the Canadian soccer sport development system. The athletes comprise four categories: those in the United States for the first time (5); those returning to the United States (2); those who attended university in the United States, and graduated with a degree (3); those who attended university in the United States, but left their institution and scholarship before earning a degree (4). In seeking out representatives in each of these groups, I desired a cross-section of evolved/ing experience, such that the reader could understand a general situation, using the words of those with lived experience to draw conclusions, or for nothing more than guidance. I was also motivated to address, based upon sentiment shared throughout my athletic administration career by athletes across sport and gender lines, the issue of how much “better” the NCAA experience actually is for those who live it.

I understand two things about this sample: a) this group is not necessarily reflective of the experience of all Canadian athletes who attend the institutions of the NCAA from across the sport spectrum; b) this group is a small selected sample. The two athletes in the returning/veteran group are not a proportional representation. After searching contacts within Canadian women’s soccer, calling leads, and asking those connected with Alberta and Canadian elite women's soccer, I compiled what I believe to be a representative cross-section of student-athletes, who, despite their often divergent backgrounds, charted similar experiences within Canada’s amateur athletic development system prior to leaving for the US. It is

interesting, though, that the group in the United States for the first time was the largest group of the four – one direct example, perhaps, of the increase of Canadian athletes realizing options outside their border.

The number of athletes is sparse because this type of detailed research would not lend itself well, or easily, to mass numbers. This endeavor involved considerable time, with greater numbers exponentially increasing required effort. I spoke, often via telephone, at length to each athlete from their position at various locations in the United States and Canada. Where possible, I tried to meet face-to-face, believing this to be the best forum for conceptual understanding. This time and cost-intensive process would only have increased with greater numbers. In addition, the numbers of Canadian student-athletes leaving for the United States in women's soccer is at this point low compared with other university sport offerings, like hockey, so that the numbers I utilized are perhaps more representative of the larger group than had I chosen a higher profile sport. My rationale was to achieve and write a balanced understanding of the American experience from the perspectives of the Canadian athlete.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is qualitative research, utilizing interview, case study and cross-case analysis ("grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analyzing different perspectives on central issues" - Patton 376) to report the perceptions of Canadian women's soccer athletes, her thoughts on participation in the NCAA, her thoughts on Canadian university sport, and on possible media influences in her decision to leave Canada. Qualitative research

assumes respondents to be thinking individuals capable of recalling and reflecting critically on their own motivations and actions.

Because my perspective was one of wanting to *know*, my inclination was to gravitate to qualitative research, an approach to research, which is:

...multimethod in focus...qualitative researchers study things in natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview...that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives." (Denzin, Lincoln, 2).

I bring a measure of personal sensitivity to this research, through professional experience. I understand athletes' frustration over a perceptual lack of recognition and attention towards sport in Canada and I understand Canadian sport and sport administration - its philosophy and limitations. I understand the lure, the desire to strive for athletic prowess in the United States. I understand also that in Canada, university sport is not the only game in town, and that the game in Canada the game does not make the rules, it is governed by them.

My research perspective could have included surveys, but I chose otherwise for several reasons. Surveys provide data, often sweeping in nature, in its attempt to generalize a given phenomenon or situation. The interview technique used in this thesis reports on the thoughts and experience of these individuals in deciding to leave familiar surroundings to study and play away, in another country and in another culture. It reports on the process and effects of those decisions, which is richer in conversation than dot blocking. The research decision was easy: interviews provide context and context is needed when comparing university sport structures across borders. This context would be missing somewhat in survey research.

However, understanding context requires time and reflection. A larger sample might not have provided significantly more information, because the sentiment shared within groups was relatively consistent. Conversation allowed for sentiments and nuances to be explored and captured, in a way that surveys do not. In terms of discussing media influence, this concept is better explored through the medium of participatory conversation (there are many, many, media surveys, of course).

Finally, because there is no research into Canadian athletes' perceptions of the NCAA experience, it seems logical to begin with the athlete as a first step. Again, it is unfathomable to me how in the university athletic system athletes are not asked. (Standing on the other side of this thesis, I see why – time). This fact does not undermine the impact of understanding, which is often achieved more effectively through discussion.

This thesis is human, about human conditions, told by humans. The paradigm is simple - I wanted to know about student-athletes thoughts, so I asked them. I spoke with and in some cases interviewed athletes. The general approach, within the realm of qualitative research, called phenomenology, validates this effort as fundamentally thoughtful.

Phenomenology aims to come into deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences. It asks 'what is this or that kind of experience like?' Phenomenology differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world. So phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory which we can now explain and/or control the world but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insight which brings us in more direct contact with the world. (van Manen, 37-38.)

The experiences and perceptions of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes were captured through interview – encounters which often synergized to become conversation:

...what people say about their experience is richer, more revealing and less dependent upon the observer's interpretations. Any misinterpretations can be corrected and gaps can be filled in (Armistead, 199).

There were few gaps with this group - they were direct, thoughtful, articulate, and sincere. They, in fact, themselves filled in any gaps, peer-editing all material related to their experience and the explanation of the situation. The next chapter is fully sanctioned by those whose voice is documented. I learned a great deal about the experience of the athlete, while I sensed the athlete learned something about herself, or at least her perspective. The exercise, in many cases, resulted in two-way understanding, not one-way siphoning. Weber (1986) describes:

The interview has its best moments when the interviewer and the participant are both caught up in the phenomenon being discussed, when both are trying and wanting to understand. At these times, both people forget the tape-recorder, forget that this is the interview, and simply talk and listen in a genuine dialogue that is focussed on the phenomenon in question. They are talking to each other rather than past each other. The interviews, then, are very much a shared experience affecting both (69).

Although I was interested in exploring the issues I have described above, and thus approached each interview with a rough agenda, the interviews were unstructured, rather than following any pre-set, question-and-answer format:

Although the interviewer comes to each interview with a basic question that establishes the purpose and focus of the interview it is in response to what the participant says that the interviewer follows up, asks for clarification, seeks concrete details, and requests stories. Rather than

preparing a pre-set interview guide, the interviewer's basic work in this approach to interviewing is to listen actively and to move the interview forward as much as possible by building on what the participant has begun to share (Seidman, 1991, 59).

I was careful, and continue to be so, in allowing the athlete to tell her story, preferring the role of observer, questioner and compiler to that of social engineer. My agenda was to listen to what the athletes had to say, and through a process not unlike sympathetic conversation, explore with them (and through them) the experience of the aspiring sportswoman facing new challenges and opportunities. I also wanted to know about their experience within the Canadian soccer system. My intention was not so much to analyze, but to collaborate with the athletes in understanding the detail and, in some cases, magnitude of their situation, framed first person.

From the moment I became interested in this question I understood the power I held as interviewer. These, after all, were by and large young female athletes, many from sheltered middle-class homes and environments. I could control conversation, but strove not to do so. I could have steered conversation consistently, but rarely had to. What would be the point? I was conscious of this power, but had no interest in using it. I wanted to know about something that interested me. I did not want to build something. I was careful and general in my introduction of topics, and gained the greatest satisfaction when an athlete would default to her opinion and concern and talk through it. That, in my mind, was always the starting point. My awareness resulted in a power-shift away from me as questioner to the athlete as provider – provider of detail, and of emphasis, in conversation:

We must show the entity or, more precisely, let it show itself, not forcing our perspective on it. And we must do this in a way

that respects the way it shows itself (Packer, Addison, 278).

I was careful to ask open-ended questions throughout each interview with each athlete. My inquiries in many cases became not so much question-and-answer, but refinements on two-way conversation. I gained perspective through asking general questions, questions like: What benefit did/do you see in leaving Canada to pursue sport and study in the United States? Do you feel your decision was a good one? What gives you that indication? How would you describe your development athletically, scholastically and personally because of your experience? How different was your situation in the United States relative to your former situation in Canada? What could Canadian sport administrators do, in your opinion, to make Canadian interuniversity sport options more viable or attractive?

2.3 Procedures

When first contacting the athletes, I explained my research goal and motivations. Then each individual was asked if they *could* speak frankly about their experience, and would be willing to share these thoughts, with no pre-tension or pressure. In each case support was instant. My motivation became a study, an idea which gained the support of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Ethics committee.

Most importantly, I wanted the Canadian women's soccer student-athletes to feel safe. I endeavored to shape an environment conducive to frank and open discussion. This was accomplished by:

a) The assurance of confidentiality. This body of work features cloaked names and places. The objective of reporting this research is to articulate individual situations in making sense of a larger whole, not to identify and single-out

individuals, programs, universities or families. Further, I wanted to ensure the Canadian women's soccer student-athletes felt safe enough to raise true concerns to me, which is often easier under the shroud of anonymity. My sense is that without this caveat the findings would be much different and perhaps more contrived.

The only descriptor within each athlete's narrative is general location (e.g. an eastern school in the United States), which may be opposite to the actual campus location, plus Division of competition, and the athlete's perception of their surroundings/cultural situation where applicable. Key actors are nameless - individuals are mentioned by title and/or situation.

b) Informed Consent - All athletes were appraised of the purpose of this research study, the commitment requested of them to participate in the interviews, and the fact they had right-of-refusal for all conclusions/interpretations related to their situation. It was also made explicitly clear to the athlete that she could withdraw from the study for any reason at any time without the fear of penalty, and any documentation or transcripts in my possession prior to that point would be returned to her should they decide to leave. That didn't happen. All respondents signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix A), which are filed and state all raw taped information will be surrendered twelve months from the time this research is presented. The raw information is filed and protected. There were no risks to the physical or physiological well being of the athletes.

c) The assurance of ownership. I am the author of this dissertation, but the athletes are co-authors of their stories. I involved each student-athlete at each step along the compiling/writing process. Each athlete was given a final draft, which they signed, prior to beginning analysis. I asked explicitly for them to scrutinize every

word, making sure both quotes and detailing of fact were correct. It was and continues to be very important to me that each individual supports the truth as I wrote it. My motivation was to ensure the validity of the data as well as reassuring them of protected identity.

In many cases I faxed the each athlete the draft of her case with instructions to closely read for accuracy and emphasis. I asked they react by either speaking with me if they preferred things change dramatically. I asked they correct mistakes in format or tone, sign, and return. The pictures of each Canadian women's soccer student-athlete are painted by me but approved by the athletes themselves.

I expected some athletes might not cooperate, or have some block preventing true expression or sentiment. This was not the case. Each of the 14 selected student-athletes agreed with my thoughts and proposal with some expressing the view that this type of research was long overdue.

In conversation, during the formal yet relaxed interviews and after my preamble on anonymity and confidentiality, the athletes spoke freely about their decisions, expectations and apprehensions. I did not sense embellishment. Without exception, and within the 62 hours of raw tape I accumulated, I believe the athletes expressed true opinion, providing me with background, understanding and clarification. After each taped interview/conversation session I spoke with each individual about the discussion. I asked if they thought I was leading the discussion, had some personal agenda I was following, or had unknowingly prevented them in any way from contextualizing central events of their experience. Thankfully, in every situation, the athletes' responded favorably.

I prepared each student-athlete with a general framework prior to our discussion, and then I allowed the thoughts of the athlete mesh with my inquisitive nature. Many athletes expressed surprise when our discussion was complete, saying 'That's it?'. This gave me the sense the conversation was not an effort – engaging and thoughtful, but clearly no chore.

I spoke with in-season athletes – those in the NCAA for the first time and those returning to the NCAA - on seven occasions throughout the 1996-1997 interuniversity season. The athletes who either left or graduated were interviewed on two occasions during the 1996-1997 season. These interviews, individually one hour in duration, were conducted face-to-face where applicable, but in many cases, due to geography and situation, conversations took place via telephone from their scholastic home, Canadian or American residence. The interview format follows:

NCAA ROOKIES/RETURNEES

Interview one - contained questions related to the athlete's previous experience, thoughts on intervarsity competition in the United States, in Canada, how/by what process the athlete was recruited, and why they made the choice they did. I was careful to gain perspective on the environment and situation *they thought* they were entering.

Interviews two through six – in-season, occurred generally – based upon the availability of the athlete - at the end of September, October, November, to coincide with the interuniversity season, plus mid-February and at the end of April. The athletes generally provided follow-up commentary, with some necessarily brief due to their workload. Each conversation began with me introducing a line of questioning, which the athlete then spoke to. From the point I introduced a line of

questioning, I allowed the conversation to roll. These unstructured conversations uncovered timely sentiment-gems, thoughts which I don't think would have happened in a structured question/answer format.

My research themes related to the athlete's perception of their environment, both academic and athletic, their thoughts on athletic and scholarly progress, and feelings of happiness/contentment, or otherwise.

Interview seven – post-season, the athlete's recollection/dominant impression of the 1996-1997 athletic and academic year, their description of their experience, whether the exercise was worthwhile and whether they planned to continue their education and eligibility in the United States.

The total interview time was approximately six hours per person.

GRADUATES/THOSE WHO LEFT

For the athletes who a) attended a NCAA institution but voluntarily left and b) graduated from a NCAA institution, I conducted two detailed retrospective interviews during the 1996-1997 academic year. Interviews were via telephone for the most part (each Canadian student-athlete who graduated in this study still resides in the United States) but in person where possible and following these general guidelines:

Interview one - Questions related to the context, setting and situation of the institution the athlete attended, their recollection of their expected academic and athletic environment versus the actual environment they encountered; their thoughts on intervarsity competition in the United States, and how/by what process the athlete was recruited. I also asked why they made the choice they did. I sought

insight into their general thoughts of college sport in the United States and their perception of university athletic programs in Canada.

Interview two – The second interview contained questions related to the athlete's current situation and whether their experiences in the United States had assisted their life chances/quality of life.

Each interview was approximately one hour in length, for a total of two hours of unedited material.

The total unedited interview material is approximately 62 hours - another argument in favour of a small sample size.

I transcribed the interviews verbatim. (It was interesting the one universal edit each athlete made was deleting her most favourite word, "like", out of the text.) Otherwise, I left all words as they said them.

My specific interest pertains to why each athlete decided to attend university in another country, the cultural differences they experienced, and how, generally, the experience aided or hindered personal and athletic development. I was motivated to provide a reasonably balanced account of the American experience from many perspectives. My rationale was to achieve and write a balanced understanding.

The writing of thoughts, perceptions and situations of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes were difficult because of volume, but were made easier because of the similarity of expressed opinion. I stuck to the pertinent details of my research question, and though some of the raw data outside of this focus is interesting, additional information outside of the presented material would have marginalized the strength of sentiment and clouded the focus. To maintain a linear

flow I, upon transcribing each of the 14 interviews, began a separation process by grouping like sentiments. This lengthy procedure resulted in the emergence of six main themes, which form chapter four, the analysis. The process was not so much subjective as challenging: I sought and found common themes across situations.

I was conscious to stay on track, and asked the athletes to provide feedback to me about the focus of their story. Again, their support and feedback was encouraged.

The raw interview materials, along with notes I took during each interview - unusual or uncommon events/behaviours, thoughts I was struck with or by - are framed in narrative in the next chapter. The narrative ties my impressions, adding context and the human element where straight transcribed quotes may not. My goal is to answer the question from the Canadian women's soccer perspective: 'what is it that makes this lived experience what it is? (Van Manen 1984, 41).'

2.4 Personal Context

I believe the positive experience of the athlete in the interuniversity situation is of utmost importance. I believe there is nothing more precious than the developing and motivated mind. I understood America values its athletes, but I sought to understand if the American system generally values its athletes as people, with depth and personalities, minds, or simply as means to an end: victories. The median age range in years of interuniversity participation is 18-24 - a finite and quickly collapsing time frame for young adults to grow, or not grow. The athletes of this study know this, and as a result athletically gifted Canadian high school seniors are naturally examining their options before deciding upon one institution to ideally spend up to five crucial early-adult developmental years.

I am an inquisitive mind who has used this skill in various media capacities - radio broadcasting and feature reporting, primarily, for 15 years. I think there is nothing worse than a talking head or thoughtless cliché. Any explanation is best when explained with context and from the heart. These preferences have steered my interest towards feature reporting. I am, clinically, a heart-centered humanist, who cares about answers to questions of experience. Thus, this story – brought to light through research, conversation and contextualization – tweaks not only the reporter in me, but also the human. This inquisitive/journalistic sense pointed my motivation towards qualitative research. The choice was a good one:

Journalists write about what is going on in society: they represent social life. Most often they report on current events, but they also write stories that offer historical perspectives and in-depth interpretations. Journalists also address major trends and social problems, not just the news of the day and sometimes these reports are very similar to the research reports of social scientists. Also like social researchers, journalists develop special topic areas: some focus on political events; some on economic trends, some on women's issues...(Ragin, 19).

Wilby in Simons (1980) wrote of journalism as an illuminating exercise, which is my goal not just for this thesis but also in my life:

But journalists ought to be modest about what their craft can achieve. They can achieve relevance and accuracy but not truth (214).

I found no general truths, but truth as told in 14 individual parts. It is told by Canadian women's soccer student-athletes. They talk about sport, status, culture and media.

CHAPTER THREE - T H E A T H L E T E S

3.1 CANADIANS IN NCAA FOR FIRST SEASON

CASE ONE – DIANE JAMES. Diane James found Club Med, and along the way she competed in Division Two soccer and soaked up some school in a sub-tropical setting of the United States. Her situation, scholastically and in sport, was a long way from and far outside the usual routine of home.

Regarded as the top recruit in her province after growing up excelling in provincial soccer, she had enjoyed an all-conference and all-Canadian season at a Canadian college. However, her one season in Canadian intercollegiate athletics confirmed for James what she says she'd always known: the United States was the only option.

"I think moving here has made me into a totally different person. It felt like I was in a cage at home. Everyone knows everything about you.

"I've always dreamed of going somewhere nice to play soccer – so I looked into hot places, and signed the first day I came here," she said via telephone from her dorm-room, shortly after arriving and quickly feeling like she had settled in.

The private university has enrollment of 3,000 students and a one-season tuition cost of \$22,000 (U.S.).

"I don't think about that," she said, "because I don't have to worry about paying for it."

She estimated her parents paid \$7,000 American for her first season and her first taste of American college sport. The first impression, however, proved to be a tough lesson.

"The first day I got here I was bawling my eyes out. I just wanted to go home. Then I came to the university to meet the team, and everybody has been unbelievable. With everyone, it's like we've known each other forever.

"I didn't have a clue what the soccer would be like here. I didn't know if I would be the worst player, or the best, or what. There were so few choices in Canada. They (the coaches) appealed to me, but my academics weren't good enough. I think it was something I always wanted. It's been my dream. I just wanted to get out of Canada."

Diane got out; soon after her situation got foreign.

"I knew it was intense because they sent me a work-out program. I came here and we trained for three sessions per day. It's just so much more intense. We had a lot of fitness testing. He (the coach) has a point system. For every skill in testing you get ranked, and he starts the top-11 on the point system. I made the top-11 so I started the first five games, and I played pretty well. I got pulled off for 10-15 minutes per game. Then he pulled me aside and said it was nothing personal, but he was going to make a change – 'you're not starting today'. I have never not (sic) started. Never been subbed out of a game. That's how hard it is here. The play is amazing.

"I don't know if I like the fact that it's competitive to the point where I'm not even seeing as much field time now. I shouldn't complain because I'm lucky to be here. I don't feel like I'm good enough to be starting.

"At home (in Canada) we don't have coaches who take you aside and work with you on skills or fitness. Everything is on your own. And everyone that has come

here, they've all had personal trainers since they were 10 or 11, and that's why I am so far behind. I haven't had as much work on my skills.

"The coach knew when I came here I wasn't confident and I wasn't scoring goals. So he would take time out and do shooting with me on my own. He singled me out and has worked with me.

"The training here is unbelievable compared to Canada. There is no way you can come here and not improve. I am happy about that part, because I know I am getting better."

Diane was also happy about her academic situation. In Club Med the stress curve is not steep.

"If I wanted a good education then I probably wouldn't be here.

"Every chance we get to go out we go out because we don't want to do much homework.

"I have already written a test. It was on algebra. The professor gave us the test the day before we wrote, and the next day we got the exact same test, except that he changed some numbers. And we were allowed to bring both tests into the classroom. Seriously, you have to be (expletive) not to get an A."

I recall thinking then, and remembering now, of the ethical and individual costs of such a system but, more importantly, the benefits from taking on personal responsibility and succeeding in achieving academic triumph. Instead, these rewards, in this and in other situations, seem to be granted, which I find shameful. Students like Diane could well get by academically under this system, but of what benefit is this to Diane in her life choices? What about after soccer? What about acquiring skills for life, for employability? Who is really winning when academics are

reduced from tool for life to commodity – property, like swampland, to be packaged and traded? She did not understand the nature of my thought and concern.

“I don’t know how to be nice about this, but school here is for like super rich parents who have, like, stupid kids. Like it seems like people will pay for their kids to come to this school so they can say they went to university, and to get a degree, because academics isn’t very good here.”

Really?

“I think that really doesn’t bother me because I still don’t know what I want to do with my life. In college I was in Education, then Physical Education and I’ve been jumping around and have not come to reach a decision. For now, I don’t have my mind set on a degree. I’m going to wait until something pops into my head.

“I would say the classes here are the equivalent to college. It’s not like university in Canada, where you have to hit the books and write papers.”

I concluded her situation was university, but without the books. By Canadian standards, I thought, it must be somewhere between high school and college. I recall smiling over this thought. Diane continued:

“It will probably affect my future, but I really don’t know what I am doing anyway. I was in Business and I just went to get my schedule and now I changed over to Fashion Marketing and Design. To this day I can’t say what I want to be.

“Soccer was my first priority in coming here.”

What about mom and dad?

“... they say if I just get my degree now while I can and while it’s being paid. Even though I don’t know what I want - yet it’s best to take advantage of this

opportunity. Even if I was at a really good school academically I probably wouldn't be taking anything too special anyway."

She talked about her city, country, province, swiftly.

"I like it here. I don't miss home at all. I miss my parents and stuff, but I don't miss home. I honestly never thought I would make it this far. I was a super mother's girl – I never washed my own clothes or ironed my clothes, so it was a big step for me that way – having to do everything on my own and manage my own money. But I've liked learning that."

She also learned about curfew, which, admittedly, is anti-Club Med.

"At home we never had drinking rules or curfew before games, but here it is pretty bad.

"They are super strict. If one person misses curfew – isn't in her room when the coach checks – he pulls everybody out to the parking lot and we run 'til we puke. We haven't done that yet, but they did it once last season. Nobody has broken curfew yet."

One particular interaction continues to be noteworthy. It's October, we are speaking via telephone for the second time. Our conversation was abruptly cut with an 'excuse me, I'll be right back.'. Diane left the phone to return five minutes later (my long distance phone bill tick, ticking along – this research was in the days before ten cents per minute). Her coach had summoned her.

Her coach? The clock in the dorm would have read 10:30pm Tuesday evening. She returned.

"I told him I was going to be on the phone, but he is just being a jerk.

"His office is in my dorm and sometimes at night he just comes here and does work and stuff."

I felt a tangible rise of private cynicism. Diane, at least, proved she is public with her thoughts.

"This place is just so hard for me to explain. I tell people they have to experience it for themselves to know how really different it is. Because I know before I went people said this place was nice, but I wondered it was all it was made out to be. It's a totally different world, all-around, it's totally different."

"I would never go back to Canada."

I asked what she meant. Diane said she would not return to Canada and play soccer. Two weeks prior to this conversation her team went to the Division Two national tournament.

"It was huge, amazing. I don't know how many we had, but we had a lot of people, and the fans are crazy here - everyone was painted, like in Europe or something.

"It was whole different crowd - they were just way more rowdy than the crowds at home, where they just sit there and watch the game.

"Everyone knows who you are here. You're on the soccer team. At home it's just a sport - they don't put what they put into it here. It's a much bigger thing here than it is at home."

Diane. One young girl having the time of her life playing college soccer. Life is sun, life is curfew, life is training, life is games, and life is school, but not really.

CASE TWO – CHRISTINE RUTAK: "I always just assumed that I would go to university in the States and play soccer."

Though slight, both in age and frame, from the moment I met Christine Rutak I knew this was a person whose character was bigger than either her age or her mass. She is diminutive, but confident and direct, which proved inspiring after hearing the details of her story. It was clear she wanted to go to the United States and play soccer. She was 18 and preparing to leave, in one week, for the Division One NCAA experience at a large and respected Midwestern school, hoping for similar, yet more positive results, than her sister, who also played NCAA women's soccer, but was cut (from her scholarship) by injury. Born in a large Canadian city, her family is American, having left Detroit 21 years ago when, in Christine's words, tension and hostility became too much.

This day Christine spoke determinedly.

"I always sort of thought I would go to the States. I didn't want to go to school around here, because, there is nothing new, and I didn't want to stay at home for the next four years."

She, similar to her style of play, was like lightning when sending out tapes to prospective NCAA coaches as a high school senior. A scholarship in the United States came only through effort.

"We looked through a scholarship book and sent off a bunch of tapes and letters. I was scouted in Montreal by the assistant coach at my school in the United States when I was playing there with the provincial team."

Her scholarship covered 80 per cent the first year. She estimated the expense in American funds she or her family would have to pay was in the order of 3,000 dollars. The total package was worth in the area of 12-13,000 dollars American. After her second year the school, for the duration of her eligibility, all education costs were to be covered. Christine committed after going on a recruiting trip.

"They are really friendly. I met a lot of people. The dorms are kind of small, but I can live with that," she said. "It wasn't intimidating at all.

"I am sort of ready to go. Most of my friends can't believe it, but I am looking forward to it. It will take a few months to get used to, but I'll get used to it."

When we next spoke the adventure was confirmed.

"The people on my soccer team have been really helpful, in the soccer aspect and also in school. "They showed me around my classes before they started.

"It's not easy but it's not quite as difficult as I thought it would be. Academically I don't have as many tough classes this semester as I will next semester."

On soccer, Christine explained her school was in its third season as an intercollegiate sport, but other, more established sports took the limelight on campus:

"There is not very much pressure from media or anything like that. The pressure is on us to try and establish ourselves.

"Everybody is pretty surprised at how well we are doing this season. We're moving up in conference and I don't think it will be long before we are an established soccer school.

"Pretty much if we don't work hard we're letting the team down, and it's a huge change from my club team."

"The competition is so much better here. I just feel that in the States that this is how they play. It's a different style of play."

"At home we didn't have to try as hard for the entire year. It was way more relaxed. Lots of practices you would hardly break a sweat. But being here and seeing how good they are makes me want to work hard.

"It's as easy and as hard as I thought it would be. I knew it would be a huge step to go from club to this, and it was. Academically I'm still adjusting but it will take a little time, but I will be alright."

Fast forward; her hectic schedule made it impossible – truly impossible - to reach Christine via telephone during the season. I finally reached her to learn she spent mornings in class, afternoons at practice, and evenings studying, because that was the only way she was going to maintain passing grades. At 18 she struck me as responsible, aware and accountable.

"It was a pretty tough season, but it went on pretty long and it felt like it was dragging on a little bit.

"The soccer practices were consistently tough and intense. We had hard fitness all the way through, every week.

"When I first started playing provincially it was really tough, but it didn't last. Here it lasts. I had to stay focussed for the entire season. As far as school and stuff, with all of the travelling lots of us have gotten behind.

"We were lucky that we got a break – I don't know what we would have done if we kept travelling.

"As soon as we got back I have been going to the library everyday."

We spoke about environment, the one white students going to white schools probably would pay no attention to. The environment we spoke of Christine knew all about, being a black student on a campus where all the black kids were athletes. It was this same environment she had spoken so cheerily of four months earlier.

"There is a lot more racial tension and stuff like that....I try not to pay too much attention."

At the point we spoke it seemed to me Christine was paying a lot of attention to answering the what-am-I-going-to-do-with-my-life question.

"I'm ready to start learning and figure out what I am going to do with myself. Next semester hopefully I'll do a lot better."

"I'll just keep working hard because I'd like to be a good player on an American University team."

I reached her eight weeks later at her home in Canada – her first time back since shortly after our conversation at the coffee shop. Christine said spring soccer, which varsity athletes are expected to play, was more successful than fall soccer: "I felt like I wasn't really a freshman anymore and I knew everybody and I felt a lot more comfortable, so I thought I played a lot better in the spring, and so did my coaches.

"I usually play better when I have to prove myself, and, you know, being with the same old people all of the time (in Canada), they know how I played and I know how they played, and it's just no reason to go out of my way I guess. I just don't feel that I would have enjoyed it as much. The coaching is the same, exactly the same as I am used to and we don't get any, like the coaching is just not that

spectacular in Canada. There is not as much attention focussed upon the soccer part of it.

"It's important for me to feel like I am playing well - not necessarily to be the best, or to feel swamped in a new environment, having to struggle. It's just important for me to feel like I've played well, and if I'm in an environment that doesn't really ask that of me, I just won't give my best."

"I like soccer, and I have always liked soccer, but after playing provincially for a while, and sort of going through the same things over and over again I just started to lose interest, and I had no reason to prove myself. You know, try-outs weren't anything special, we weren't into fitness, and there wasn't anything for me to do. I mean, I didn't have to try that hard. It just wasn't such a big deal."

And what of her progress, after the season , after the practice, after the racism, after the papers:

"The difference between most players is that a lot of players have tons of talent, talent enough to go to the States, and to go to a top school and things like that. But the difference is whether they are fit and whether they want to succeed. Before, I guess I had enough talent to get there, but, um, before I was there I didn't have the desire and I wasn't fit. But now I just feel - like I have more desire.

"I still have a long ways to go but I feel like I've come a long ways as well."

After the season, after she had some time, Christine had detailed thoughts on the difference between the Canadian and American collegiate athletic systems.

"I think it's just the whole American-Canadian mentality. Canadians are geared more towards education, which is good, but Americans it's like if you have the gift of being an athlete then you need to go all the way with it. I don't know, it's

a much bigger part of their lives. When you consider their national team versus our national team, the soccer players there by the time they are 14 years old they know they want to play on the US National Team because they are World Cup winners and all of this kind of stuff. Being on the Canadian national team was never a goal of mine, really. We would play them in scrimmages, and they would beat us, maybe 2-1. And the national team should be just killing everybody in Canada, because they are the national team, but they don't. In the US they have under-14 national teams and they're breeding people from the time they are young to be good players, and the mentality of wanting to be the best. Here it's just play for fun, do what you want to do, go to school, and then you can try out for this if you really want to."

And what of improving the situation in Canada?

"It's the coaching as well as the funding - if we had better coaches from the time I was younger that, you know, pushed us a little bit. I guess when I was younger there were so many politics, and the main focus was never becoming a better player. There were always so many distractions. If we had more intense coaches at the under-12 and under-14 ages, that got kids motivated, and we had more technical coaching all the way up, I think that would make a big difference. Also the funding for universities keeps getting cut, and it's just obvious that athletics in Canada aren't as a big a deal. I think if the athletes had a place that they could workout, and there was a place where all of the athletes could go and feel like they have done something, I think that would make a difference.

"If I had kids I would like them to become involved in sport, because I think it helps a lot to make a well-rounded person, you know, to meet different people

and to travel to different places and things like that. But if sports aren't held in higher regards in Canada, I think we'll lose a lot of good athletes."

CASE THREE – JACKIE STEVENS: Jackie Stevens is a stocky jock with no reservations about spelling out the virtues of American College sport. Though a later starter, she started playing serious soccer at 14, Stevens improved and impressed quickly enough to earn a double-scholarship for soccer and softball - her first love - with a NAIA institution. She is Canadian and considered the United States for one overarching reason. She explained by example:

"The important part about being an athlete is you want to be treated like someone special. I mean I put a lot of time into training, and I kind of feel like I deserve to get some recognition because 'yes, you did work real hard to get here' and this school offers that to me. It's nice not to have to worry about buying a pair of soccer boots. Little things add up, and to be treated like 'yes you are important' and 'yes, you playing this sport does mean something to our school, does make a difference.'

"At my other school I was looked as just as an athlete."

While still a "nobody" at her NAIA school, Stevens played three seasons of soccer and one of softball before deciding to leave and complete her senior season and undergraduate degree at a Division One NCAA institution. The school is in a geographic region continentally kitty-corner to her home province, a school with an impressive athletic reputation, tropical temperatures, and greater recognition for

athletic prowess, which Stevens seems to possess by the barrel-full. But recognition did not come in Canada, and that spot is sore.

"For me, I am motivated much more than I would be in Canada because we don't get that attention.

"When you have that many people paying attention and care about what you do out there, for me it motivates me to work my hardest.

"For me personally it was probably one of the best moves I have ever made, for my own soccer development. Not so much developing my skills. My one thing that has always held me back was my fitness level. In this environment with the heat and everything, I had to be in better shape. So I worked really hard to get into better shape and I'm probably more fit than I've ever been.

"Being down here and having the change of scenery motivated me. Plus playing against players who play for the American national team has kind of opened my eyes to show me what I have to do to play at that level.

"It's exciting to be down here, and I am excited to maybe work down here in the future.

"They treat it like it's the big leagues down here.

Stevens initiated and enacted her exit from the NAIA. She declared an interest in being part of the "The Show" - part of the big-time sports entertainment world in America.

"They didn't recruit me, I went to them. The coach there is a Canadian and she guest coached me before. They are family friends. They thought I was a good player. It was all so up in the air and I didn't want to do anything illegal or get into trouble.

"I was open and honest. They had to have me send a letter saying I wanted to leave. It was done that day, I got my release. I phoned them and we talked. I flew down there in February, had a look at the school, came back, and decided I was going."

Athletic confidence became conversational confidence when talking about family and sport.

"I wouldn't have been able to do half the things I've done without my parents. My dad still plays soccer and has coached myself, my sister, and my brothers. They are at all my games. Part of my deal to go to the States with my family was that I had to send game tapes home so they could see me play."

That was 1995.

"When I came out of high school I was known but I was always one of those kids that honestly didn't get the recognition I felt I deserved. I'm a big person. Like I'm not a little person that runs fast, which is what they (Canadian schools) seem to like. I always got shafted, basically. I always got cut."

The bitterness, I sensed, was intended. Jackie's voice cracked at the point she spoke of feeling shunned to the sidelines in Canada.

"I wanted to play in an American league. I was recruited by American schools, but nothing really came of it. Once again, they could never make promises. And I heard so many horror stories about American schools, and I was really skeptical even with my school, and, you know, 'I'm going to go down there and they're going to cut my scholarship and I'm going to be stuck there and not be able to come home and not have any money.'"

That didn't happen. In fact, she received an 80 per cent scholarship with a promise that it would be a full-ride if she passed a series of fitness tests. That did happen.

"Here I get food, rent, books, tuition - I don't have to worry about anything. "We're not allowed to work because you're a full scholarship athlete. Your job is to play soccer and go to school.

"Being an athlete there, they treated you like you were an elite. In Canada you didn't want to go around telling your teachers you were an athlete because they'd think you're in there for a free ride, this and that, which is far from the truth. The attention we got, the academic support, the importance they put on our sport...made us feel important."

Jackie spoke of the difference between her NAIA experience to that of the NCAA, She passionately explained feeling embarrassment and sensing the rolling eyes in class when she would say she had to move an exam, get an extension on a paper, because of athletic trips. She then turned, in tone and point, to explain that in the NCAA she, for the first time, really felt like a somebody, being an athlete.

"I didn't go into debt, either. It was nice not to worry about anything except playing soccer and going to school."

The entitlements, which come with NCAA status, do not involve athletic items exclusively. In many situations life – its worries and stresses – is made easier, more exclusive. I suppose that is one significant appeal to the NCAA athletic program.

"I didn't have to do anything. In Canada I had to work 30 hours per week plus going to school plus playing soccer, you know, it was hard trying to pay rent every month, and not having to worry about that was really nice.

"The whole athletics attitude is so much different. The coach is just the coach. At my other school she was the coach, the sports camps instructor, and had another job because it was not really full-time.

"Here recruiting is a year-round thing. Seeing what my coach's job is, is, like, what I want to do.

"The whole attitude of the whole campus in the States was much more athletically oriented, so it made us feel a lot more important. In the NAIA, we didn't have a lot of fans in our facility, which isn't really a stadium; it's kind of a field with a bunch of stands. At my (NCAA) school it is amazing. They got the school flag, and the TV crew was they're getting all of the fans, everybody got into it a lot more. It wasn't just a soccer game. There were promotions on the radio, big signs on the highway, just little things like that, the local news station was at everything and announced everything.

"Down there is a football stadium, a soccer stadium, a basketball stadium, a women's soccer stadium. Average attendance is 1,000 people for soccer games. And how could I turn that down? That's what I want - to be a part of something that's just great."

Academics, it seems, was just great as well, at least from the perspective of quantity.

"The workload is considerably less. The amount of time I have to put into my courses is a lot less. Testing is the main source of grading here, rather than term papers and things like that. I'm used to writing papers, and I do not have to write any papers.

"They keep track of our absences. If we have more than four we get reprimanded. One of the girls got suspended in one of our biggest games because of absences.

"They really recognise the accomplishments of their athletes. They have this gala for all of the athletes that get over a 3.0.

"I've learned ways to study and take notes. I'm focussing more here. Everyday there is a study hall here for freshman, which I am not mandated to go to. But I do go anyway. It's just two hours - seven to nine - after practice, so I go and get some work done. And I would never do that back at home.

"I'm looking to be in education. My ideal profession would be to get into coaching - either the coach of a university program or involved with the Canadian Soccer Association, hopefully to help them get their act in order.

"I'd like to stay in Canada. I like Canada a lot. It could be much better than what it is, but I'm hoping this experience will open some doors for me, and then I can come back and maybe do something with that."

"I've had some reservations about holding a degree from the States, and you know, you hear all those rumors that it is not valid in Canada. My status of having a degree from here won't affect my chances to get a job in Canada."

Stevens did something with her final athletic season. She was the team's top scorer with 15 conference goals. Though her team, with only three athletes returning, finished eighth in her conference and lost its final game 7-1, Stevens scored the only goal in her final collegiate game.

"Statistically I did very well, but because the conference is so strong in having seven teams nationally ranked, it is very difficult to get the recognition. This

year we had nothing to lose and everything to gain. It wasn't a surprise that we lost. It was my last game ever in college, and it was kind of upsetting.

"It wasn't so much the loss as the realisation that I was done. It will hit me more next year. It's more filling my time that I'm worried about.

"I think it has helped me. Academically, down here there is so much more opportunity for young coaches, especially women, and with a lot of the universities opening up (new programs). And the funding to do it." The implementation of Title IX has created new opportunity for females in college sport. Stevens, and other Canadian athletes, are benefactors. However, the issue of funding, and lack thereof, formed the basis of Stevens thoughts on Canada, and its collegiate athletic system.

"They have to offer the money. A lot of my friends don't get any funding. There are so many things that I think have to change.

"Why close the door? Money is a major factor and funding is a major problem with Canadian soccer."

Granted, but how does Canadian soccer or amateur athletics *get* more money? Jackie, for the first time, was silent. Then she continued:

"We're behind in the development of athletes. Everybody wants to play in the States because they are of the belief that NCAA soccer is the best soccer in the world. I don't know if Canada can ever take that away from them. I don't know if that's possible. The NCAA is the best league in pretty much every sport.

Read the forthcoming contradiction with perspective on the limits of qualitative research. Sure I have taken great care to capture the thoughts of the subject as spoken, but, at points, like below, spoken sentiment leads to more questions than answers.

"Maybe that's the step they have to take in Canada - start that interaction with the NCAA and see where they stand.... A lot of the teams we played last season I thought my club team in Canada would have killed in a game.

"This whole scholarship issue is just pushing athletes out. I mean, it's just pushing them away. A lot of kids can't afford to pay for school, and if they have the opportunity to get 80 per cent of their school paid for or 100 per cent, go, why not?

"It is true that everybody down there is there for the same reason - they all want to focus on school, but they are there to play soccer. They are all from somewhere else. They all came into a school to play soccer, which is different from here, where it was like go to the local college or university.

"The success of the Americans in the World Cup and the Olympics, you know, everybody knows about them, and it's like, 'I want to go there, I want to play there.'"

But, Jackie, what does Canada do? Nothing, then a lot more of the same thing?

"For someone like me.... it's just going to push us away.

"Now the NCAA is getting more and more exposure because of women's programs. There is a women's professional soccer league starting up and the NCAA will be the feeding ground for that. The NCAA is the highest level of intercollegiate athletics.

"But then if it was a partial (scholarship) offer in Canada I would think twice and maybe think about staying in Canada."

There was no partial offer and because of that Stevens certainly was partial to her experience in the United States.

"Moving to the NCAA for me soccer-wise was a good experience."

CASE FOUR – SERA CHRISTIANSEN: "I think the whole aspect of growing up playing soccer and wanting to fulfill your dream."

These words – in some form or other – were spoken often by diminutive Sera Christiansen. She enjoyed her experience in the United States and had many thoughts on the Canadian system. It was within the Canadian system that Christiansen earned an undergraduate degree.

Her family was supportive when she went to the Canadian campus close to home, played in the CIAU, and they were there when she decided to take her talent elsewhere. She is well supported in her life.

"They really always pushed me to be independent and try new experiences and get the best out of life. They think it's going to be a good experience no matter what. It won't just be a good soccer experience, but a good life experience also. "

Her brother and father are athletic and her mom still plays in a women's over-30 soccer league, and she is 50. It was no surprise she started playing soccer at age four, and played with the same club team from age eight to 18.

"I think it kind of kept me out of trouble," she said. Christiansen spent two seasons in the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union, and talking about this experience wiped away the smile she had as we sat.

"The Canadian university experience just wasn't challenging anymore. Our team lost a lot of good players. It wasn't what I wanted to be doing. I just felt that I

would really like to concentrate on school and soccer and kind of try new things and see what I want to do with my life.”

Two seasons before leaving, Sera, then-and-now among the Canadian elite in women’s soccer, had an offer to attend university in the United States. The situation “just never worked out” but she was relieved when another opportunity presented itself.

The second situation was one of dream realized.

“From talking to players who played in the NCAA, and seeing them develop, it seemed to me that I would be able to challenge myself on different levels.

“I love the supportive crowd. I just think it would be a neat experience, something we don’t get here (in Canada), and something I’d like to do once in my life.”

Set with a full scholarship, she was granted admission into a master’s program (exercise science) with one season of eligibility remaining, and was given tropical accommodation in a condominium with two bedrooms and two baths.

Her experience was far from the starving student – it was wrapped in luxury and included early respect. The coach spoke with Sera about team leadership before she arrived.

“Some of the athletes will be in their first year and obviously will have other things on their mind besides soccer. I am past that and kind of want to be more of an achiever.

“Seeing the soccer team, the women’s soccer team having their own poster, and thinking, ‘geez, we never have that.’ Maybe there was a sense of jealousy and

maybe a feeling that we never had that, and a hopeful feeling of 'I wish we had that.'"

Her dream unfolded like a Harlequin before a big break-up September 10, 1996.

"We're driving down, like, one of the main strips in town. A car turned right in front of us. It was this guy who had no insurance, no license, and had been drinking. And he turned and it left me with no time to react.

"We hit him going around 40 miles per hour.

"But I had my seatbelt on with the airbag, and my face was stuck in the airbag all the way in.

"I still broke my thumb, and tailbone, and bruised my back and neck.

"I was in shock, my blood pressure went down. They said I had a low white blood cell count after the accident.

"Sitting in three hour classes I was dying. When I read my neck was killing me because I was getting headaches.

"You don't have your family around you. The normal social setting. Even the little things seem big. You feel like you're inconveniencing people."

With medical bills escalating Christiansen's fight subsided, but only briefly.

"It was such a disappointment to get off to a start like that. And now it affects my play. I was in pretty good shape when I went down, and taking those few weeks off and not being able to do my weight training brings me down."

Despondent, she did what she could, attending class with stimulants on her back so she could sit from start to finish. On the pitch, though not able to contribute, she noticed great change in the team. They were coming together, though this

process and her inability to take direct part in it led, naturally, to feelings of estrangement.

"The bulk of the girls are freshman. How they see the game is completely different. It's like how they read the game and their confidence on the ball – they're paranoid.

Sera practiced three times per week in Canada but noticed that doubled in Division One. The attention she was paid once able to play was "totally" beyond compare.

"You always have something to fall back on if you've had a rough game. You know that you will always have that support. I never felt that in Canada.

"They have the best facilities with a trainer, with a strength/conditioning coach, and I never had that at home.

"Right now I've started my off-season program, which is two weeks after the season. At home I wouldn't start until maybe four months later."

Academically Christiansen was sold, because that was her reason for being – sport as means to school.

"Maybe it's a bit more practical here. We'll do a lot of theory in class and then go out into the community and apply that theory. At home I would never see that."

Sera spoke in heartfelt tones about team bonding activities in the United States and the sense of closeness she felt: practices, weight training, running, together - getting to know the team was effortless. It was not that way in Canada, where "we'd get together one, maybe two weeks before the season, and it was really casual and nothing intense.

"We would practice maybe once or twice in the second semester (in Canada)."

Sera's CIAU team rarely lost over the course of her athletic career. She won a CIAU title. But still, achieving the highest level in Canada still left lingering feelings of dissatisfaction.

"The training in the States got me really into soccer and really into school. I wasn't sure what the level of soccer would be like in the States. But it got me more into training and working on the weaker aspects of my game."

When we last spoke she was home, relaxed, but still in pain. This was no small injury. I asked if sitting and talking caused her slight frame to ache. She said yes. Since the accident she always feels pain. A chiropractor appointment prevented us from meeting earlier in the day. But the obvious pain in her back did not lead to a crack in her voice: Sera had no regrets over her decision, and though slowed by the accident, she made the most of her final collegiate season of eligibility by acquiring, sometimes vicariously, the full-on Division One experience. Having lived each system, Sera had some direct thoughts on the differences between the Canadian and American systems.

"At the end of the year they produced a really nice video of our team with a lot of memories; it was just a really inspirational and moving experience. And, like, I felt a real closeness with the school, and a bond with the team. And they placed a great amount of importance on us; 'we really care what happens' we're here to support you' – like, a lot of back up. You always had something to fall back on, even when you had a rough game."

Or a rough season.

"I think the Canadian system has to be more structured. Before I went to university in Canada I had no expectations of anything. I hadn't heard anything. I was just going there because I lived there. Something that will draw athletes. There is no structure, it just happens. There is no real recruiting process. They need some kind of scholarship process – like it starts at 20 per cent and as you improve it moves up to 60 per cent. Some kind of goal as you improve. Some kind of incentive. Even like a book scholarship. It doesn't have to be money. Something that you feel that you're accomplishing as you become a better player. I think the structure has to come from the whole athletic program, not just soccer.

"I think the coaches can have a big say because they communicate their sport to the administration."

Rolling, I asked Sera Christiansen what she would say to high school athletes thinking of staying in Canada or leaving.

"I would tell her to go to the States in a second. I think a lot of people stay in Canada because they have heart in staying in their own country and their own cities, and I think that is great.

"But then I think the whole idea of moving away and having that experience and improving my soccer and getting free schooling over-ruled that. I always had a heart for Canada, but it's like we always get the tail end of everything. Even though you have heart, it always seems like in the end it's 'ah, well we tried.' I have had enough of that. I wanted that childhood dream, and I didn't have that in Canada, I didn't feel that special feeling that once in your life you will have, and will always be able to hang on to that.

"Everyone wants that day of fame or whatever, and I got that.

"I think it's like that in any sport, except hockey. Any sport that's not in the public eye, or sponsored. Even for me it was surprising. To me that's shocking. It's like the country has turned its back on sport.

"I think it has to become more structured. Something that will draw athletes. There is no real recruiting process where it's known that Canadian coaches recruit. There it is exciting because all of the recruits are coming and the atmosphere is exciting.

"If athletic programs supported athletes then the perception will grow. The success will come as the programs build.

"I think the coaches can have a big say because they are the ones which communicate their sports to the administration. Talking to players who went to the States and ask them what they liked about the experience, and then try and create that atmosphere, and bring that information back.

"In Canada you're really not ever a full-time athlete. You can't succeed. People at all the high levels in America are on a salary and do their sport eight hours a day. Well, think of what we produce.... In that aspect Canada really is inferior to that. It is amazing that we produce as well as we do with what we have. Some say heart or whatever, but some say we're sick of trying - let's win.

"In order to get to that next stage, you need support."

CASE FIVE – TONI PARSONS: Toni Parsons is the sort of individual you would think plays soccer. She is stocky, competitive, bubbly and altogether athletic in both demeanor and perspective. And she loves to talk, about her sport and, likely, anything. Like many other young adults she uses the words "like" and "totally"

interchangeably in conversation, which becomes less-and-less interesting after first making the discovery. Toni began playing soccer at age five, and played on the same club from age ten to age 18. The early support for her athletic efforts came not from community, but from family.

"...especially my dad. He played like professional baseball, well semi-pro, and he's very competitive, and my mom, she used to play high school sports. They encouraged us at a young age.

"They totally wanted me to keep going. I mean, I totally enjoyed it – it's not like they pushed me – they totally supported me."

Parsons heard about the United States through friends in club soccer. A recruiter contacted her, introduced the coach, and the rest swiftly fell into place.

The Division One institution she attended in the southwestern United States was going into its second year of operation, and was offering free education and a chance, the opportunity, to pioneer a winning tradition. At least that is what she was told.

"They (parents) were really cautious when they heard about the offer. They were like 'well, we don't know.' I'm the one that pushed them. I had been two years at college (in Canada) and didn't want to go back for another year, because there is only a certain amount of courses you can take, plus it's just the same college soccer. I mean, it's not that high of a level or anything.

"I was thinking about going away to school and when this came up I figured it would be beneficial for me, so I totally wanted to go for it. A lot of my friends are in the States playing hockey and baseball. There are only a few of us who stay home. There aren't very many people home during the year at all."

She is one of the expatriates. Though a large Canadian university is 20 minutes from home - an outwardly logical choice - when the choice became the United States or Canada, options narrowed to one.

"I kind of doubt I would have tried-out for the local team. My impression from the friends I talk to who go is that they hate it. They said you walk around all day by yourself, you don't talk to anyone."

Obviously a case of case-closed. She wanted to go where nobody knew her name, with unknown rules and challenges.

"I never really felt intimidated by the experience because they were the ones who approached me. It wasn't like I had to beg to get a shot. They have been like so good. They have done everything that I've needed."

Toni's tale of scholarship was a case of exaggerated facts. The offer of paid education did not mean financial concerns suddenly became erased.

"Yah, it's a full academic ride, but it's going to cost me the same amount to go there and pay for room and board and it would be to go here (in Canada, for tuition and books). It's the opportunity - not many people get to do it.

"They haven't really said I'm going to start, but I kind of think I am, just because there is (sic) only seven scholarship players and the rest are basically just walk-ons. The school isn't expected to do well for the next few years.

"I want to show people what Canadians can do, because nobody down there seems to think Canadians even play soccer."

Once there, the ease of adjusting to life without parents for the first time was smooth as the set-up.

"The work-load is more than I thought. It seems like I have no time. As far as missing home, I haven't, not at all.

"Athletes here are widely recognized. They have so many opportunities, like for tutors and stuff. You get free everything for tutors. When you register for classes you don't wait in line, you go straight to the front. "To get your books you give them a list and they get them for you. You are just like put on a pedestal almost. Not that I mind... there are articles about someone on the team everyday during the season.

"People come out to games and stuff, and it's nice to see. No one is used to that in Canada.

"The sports section in our paper are just as big as the regular section. There is (sic) always articles in there.

On the field Parsons slumped.

"At the beginning of the year I played striker. That is sort of the forward position. You get your name in the paper all of the time. So like at the beginning it was good and then I struggled because I have never played striker before, and I couldn't really get into it, because I wasn't scoring. So I asked to be put back on 3/3/3 defence. I'm playing a lot better now, but I am going unrecognized. I was conference athlete of the week when I was playing striker, but not after that."

The team finished three games under .500.

"We weren't expected to do well. We did better than expected, but still under .500 you can't say is good.

"There were times during the season, because we weren't doing that well, you just kind of ask the question 'do you really want to be here?' 'Is this what you

want?’ But then you look at the big picture and everything about it – it’s just opportunity that I will never get again.”

The opportunity Toni received is somewhat unique, but her frustrations with the coach were altogether common.

“Our head coach, if he told me to run around the field as hard as I could I couldn’t even motivate myself to do that, but on the other hand, our assistant coach knows how to totally get under your skin and like motivate you to play, even if it’s negative. She reads the players well, and really motivates me.

“Without that, it would be tough, even to show up to practice and be serious. Our practices are serious, very serious during the season, but if it was just the head coach it wouldn’t be. It would be tough to get through a drill. She runs like virtually everything. She makes up for what he lacks, and more.

“I’ve learned so much from her, but I can’t say the same about him.”

Academically, evaluation involved primarily showing up.

“I was like a mediocre student in Canada and I went down there and scored like a perfect GPA (grade-point-average). It’s not like I worked exceptionally hard. Like, I did some homework and whatnot, but it kind of concerns me. They base most of their things on attendance rather than like learning the stuff. If you are there and sign your name – they take attendance in most classes – you’ll do fine. It’s kind of like junior high. It’s not responsibility. I probably want to come back to Canada and take like a Master’s degree or whatever, and I don’t know if I’ll be up-to-par with the Canadians, because down there it is a totally different curriculum. The teaching there is just different. It’s based on attendance, not memorizing and like drilling stuff

into your head. And that's what I was used to in Canada. It does concern me to come back to Canada. I don't know if I'll be ready."

She wasn't ready for culture shock.

"It's a lot different. I mostly notice the racism kind of thing. It's not so much racism but it certainly is segregated. I don't know, it's like hostility between races. I talk to people the way they talk to me. You go into a classroom and the black people are sitting on one side and the white people are sitting on the other kind of thing. It's just kind of – no one speaks about it, but it just kind of happens.

"I try to keep an open mind. One of my friends back home is black and I don't even think about it, but here it is such a big issue. It's like you can't be friends with everyone. People look at you funny when you are.

"I don't know about how different I am – I think the experience like totally like broadened my mind, though, just living on your own in a totally different city. It was so different than my city, like almost more cultured and stuff, almost like I feel I am. I have seen a totally different side of the world, and I wouldn't say I'm a different person, but I am a more open-minded person."

She spoke of "more culture" in her adopted city to mean, I gather, a more vibrant nightlife. Her city featured a multi-block strip of bars, well lit in a river theme. I guess this is culture to a 20-year-old.

"I had an idea when I moved out that things would be different and stuff, but I didn't realize how different the two worlds would be. Like, it's like black and white."

Just like her thoughts on Canada.

"In a way the Canadian system is better because it doesn't corrupt institutions and under-the-table stuff – I mean, obviously everybody knows that goes on. But the Canadian system doesn't give any athlete that much incentive."

She could have easily substituted the word money for the word incentive. When corruption is understood as convention by athletes at basically minor programs in minor schools, what does that suggest about the nature, extent, and pervasiveness of this phenomenon at institutions throughout the United States? Money does motivate, but should it within a university athletic framework?

"There is just very little incentive in Canada. Then you think of the media. For top-ranked football players in Canada what is the chance he will get noticed? In the States there is always a lot of alumni out and scouts out and media keep track of them. I don't think there is the same opportunity for Canadian athletes. For instance, in Canadian soccer, there it is not high profile and there is not that much opportunity afterwards, but I think the main incentive (scholarships for aspiring athletes) is like, almost insulting.

"In the States if you're good you get the better scholarship. In Canada it's almost insulting that a bench player gets the same amount of scholarship."

Isn't amateur athletics supposed to be played for the love of the game? It seems it is played for the love of money.

3.2 VETERAN CANADIAN ATHLETES IN NCAA

CASE SIX – JULIE STEVENS: "To go play and a different environment – not that it's better or worse – it's just different."

Julie Stevens did not walk out on her country because she chose another one to attend university.

"I have a tiny bit of regret when I look at the whole experience. I think it was my own personal decision. It's not so much the university, it's the country and a totally different culture. Now that I've seen this I would not trade the experience I've had.

"I've seen a lot more of the world.

"There are little things that are so different. I have a broader view – way more than if I stayed in Canada. Some people may not want that but it was something I needed to see. I have always been fascinated with what else is out there."

For Stevens sport and life are one and the same. She played soccer from age five and ringette from age six. Never one to tire from new athletic challenges, Stevens picked up hockey in 1995.

"My brother played hockey. My dad was a professional hockey player. My sister always played soccer and I always watched her. My dad coached me forever. He coached my brother until he quit hockey and then he started with my sister and I in soccer. He started up the women's hockey and coached ringette teams too," Stevens said of her family and early sport experience in an eastern Canadian suburb.

Going to school and studying in the United States did not enter Stevens' mind until a high school recruiter pitched the idea after he watched her play in a high school game. Shortly after, her future Division One coach contacted her. After a recruiting trip and weighing the pros and cons of the options laid before her, Stevens

was bound for the southwest United States at a newly-formed Division One institution.

"It will be neat to look when I'm finished and say we were the first. You will always remember all of the firsts. The coach told us that when we were thinking about going down there.

"I really didn't know what it was going to be like. But I liked the first impression. I had so many questions when I moved down there. I had a picture in my mind, and then coming down this year I already knew the picture.

"You knew what training camp was going to be like after the first year. You know, you knew what you were going into. Sometimes that's good and sometimes that's bad. Our record was better. We had to work hard to do well. We didn't have the players. This year we thought we were going to get a lot of players and we didn't. So it was frustrating, and some parts it was frustrating, but it ended out pretty good. You always want to do a lot better.

"I have a full scholarship for the school part. Like, tuition and books. And then we got food checks every month. But the flights were really expensive and then just living is more expensive with the exchange. Like there prices are a little cheaper but if you work it out it's probably more expensive.

"That's kind of neat. It will be neat once I'm finished to say we were on the first team. Our coach told us about that."

Stevens' coach did not discuss much else.

"A lot of games we didn't have any subs or we had to put a weaker player in that shouldn't have been out there in normal circumstances. It did hurt us a bit. But we did improve a lot. It was just slower than I expected it would be.

"Everyone listens to the assistant coach and not him. I don't why he's there. I mean no one has gone forth and I don't think his boss or whatever knows what's going on. He could have his job on the line I think if the recruiting doesn't improve. From what they look at we have improved, so I guess it looks like he is doing a good job.

"Everyone on our team thinks the same about him.

"He's very easy-going, which I don't think is very good for a coach. He doesn't demand respect from anyone. He can't explain things or communicate very well. Most everyone is turned-off by him.

"I knew it last year so I'm kind of used to it."

Academically, Stevens improved through re-focus, posting a perfect 4.0 grade-point-average in the final semester of her second season, completing 32 hours of academic credit when 12 hours qualifies as full-time studies.

She declared a major – exercise and sport science – but expressed indecision over her career.

"I wouldn't have gone down if it wasn't for soccer, I know that. You know I would have gone to school in Canada. I'm not one to look for a big academic school – I'm just looking for a degree and I'll be happy with that. And I have concentrated more on school. I just want to do better for myself."

CASE SEVEN – BRENDA WALTER: "I was just ready to go away I guess."

Brenda Walter talks directly, but in short bursts, leaving the interviewer to read between the lines. However, there is clarity in her experience: positive. When

Walter was growing up in bedroom community Canada she, frankly, thought that was it – community living would continue and she would probably soon go to school at the university in the neighbouring metropolitan area.

“I played basketball and volleyball in high school. I never really thought seriously that I would go away – especially not that far away.”

Her Division One experience took her across the continent, to new surroundings, to a university with a new Division One women’s soccer program. Her adopted home was culturally opposite from her Canadian foundation. Her play caught the eye of an interested recruiter, a Canadian headhunter for American universities, resulting in a swiftly executed recruiting trip, then BOOM - things suddenly became a whole lot different.

“To be honest I didn’t really think about going away to college until my last year of high school. I always thought I would go to school in Canada, but the opportunity arose and I took it mostly because of the experience - just to see what it was like.

“We went on a recruiting trip and everything seemed pretty cool. I had never really thought about going down to the States. In my case nothing could be done to keep me in Canada.’

One recruiting trip and suddenly one less large life decision to worry about.

“Like the people are really nice and in that sense it’s not that different. It’s just their ritual and stuff like that is different in some ways. Racial things are a lot different.

“Things are really different actually. It’s a completely different lifestyle.

“I have two different lives. When I’m away I am completely different.”

The differences Walter sighted – in lifestyle and personality – involved breaking away from the routine of suburban Canadian living, with its same routine, friends, and way of life. In the United States her life was regimented between classes and practice, with off time dedicated to hanging out with friends around campus. This was a marked difference from her lifestyle in Canada, where hanging out became mundane so she didn't. It was for these reasons she left Canada without hesitation or regret. She went to a new program screaming for an identity. In the process, she clarified her own. On the pitch and in life she learned a valuable lesson, a lesson learned harshly by many expansion teams – wins come neither easily nor frequently in the gelling process.

"Our team is really close and we play well – it's just that we're not awesome or anything. I don't know. It's still rewarding to me because you know it's the second year of the program and just being a part of history is kind of cool in that sense too.

"I care about the level and I'd like to do better, but, you know, it takes time.

"I don't really think it's a problem that needs to be solved.

"We're getting stronger. Our first year the coaches were new and they didn't recruit as well as they should have, or they started way too late. This year they've been working on it since the season ended.

"We're really close and we play well. It's still rewarding because it was the second year of the program and I am still a part of history, which is kind of cool. I just love playing, so I don't really care."

She went to the United States to play soccer with a free education – winning was not foremost in her mind. The team had seven scholarship athletes its first

season, with the rest of the team making it as walk-ons, non-scholarship athletes. Therefore, as a paid player, she started through the first painful and second uncomfortable competitive season. The team was not about to leave its paid athletes on the bench. She struggled along with her team, but in her mind, the school was paid for and she was far from home, on her own, by her rules, so everything was worthwhile. Just being there, she said, was an education.

"You just see how big they are - so into their nation. They will die for their sports teams."

In Canada this statement could only work in a generalized manner in the sport of hockey. Another appeal seems to be the fact Canadians seem unwilling to "die" for sport.

Brenda was passionate, though laconic, in describing how large and important college sport was projected to be, compared to how insignificant and underground it appeared to be in Canada. She enjoyed the attention toward college sport, wearing campus colors and turning heads.

"The campus and the rest of the city are pretty separate. Downtown it's pretty scary. As long as you're in the right place."

The campus where she played was away from the downtown area, which she explained was run-down and racially tense. Brenda said she didn't feel comfortable downtown without being in a large group, but because of training and school didn't go there often. Life became a triangle of training, schooling and living, in a narrow area of campus.

"The people are really nice. But their accents and ritual are different. Tension. The whole racial thing. You hear stories. The white people just seem way more racist.

"Knowing that I'll have friends from all over North America for the rest of my life. I'll be able to go to the States and know it.

"I love both of my lives. It's a great thing." Racism did not seem to affect her any more than confirming she was in a different place, a place she wanted to be for the moment. The other life, though, seemed more meaningful.

"Canada is cleaner. Better morals. It's pretty stereotypical but it's more racist in the States. There are too many conflicts. Life in Canada is simple."

Interesting that despite the money paid for her education and the athletic profile enjoyed by Brenda – levels that only professional hockey players enjoy in Canada – she elaborated on how racial tensions made her tense. She couldn't understand, so she avoided such situations, which meant she had to avoid a lot of situations. By leaving, she came to appreciate the finer cultural nuances of being Canadian.

"Money is a big thing for me going away, but I don't think the Canadian situation will really ever change. Getting more scholarships. I know some people want to go to the States, but I don't know that it's all that many. Not everyone grows up and dreams of going away. I think the Canadian way is good, too.

"I guess just publicising it more. I don't know how athletes are acknowledged here, but in the States, for the basketball players, for example, they are heroes to the city."

Walter's detailed reply on academics (If you go to class and do your work it's not hard. I'm not a brain but it's not bad at all) was revealing. She spoke in general terms but still substantiated the belief that the education program was substandard in America, with shady practices, while similarly confirming the Canadian education system appeared to be more credible, with greater opportunity. However, detail flowed when advising potential recruits.

"I'd tell them to go for it and it might be hard your first semester, your first year, but in the long run if you stick with it it's going to be an amazing experience. You have to keep things in perspective - you're living far away from home, "learning almost a new culture, yet you still have your old culture. You will always have that to come back to. So why not take four years out of your life and just go for it?"

"I think for most of the people it's not a positive experience for, they don't give it a chance. I know it's scary, especially if you go away by yourself. After my first year I just think that's all I needed. Getting through that and giving it time is the key to happiness.

"For me the opportunity was free academics with the bonus of playing soccer."

3.3 CANADIANS WHO LEFT THE NCAA

CASE EIGHT – JEN BARNES: When Jen Barnes was growing up all she saw was her brother, everywhere. He was a NCAA athlete; his impressive athletic accomplishments playing hockey lingered and littered the family home. For Jen there was no escape. She experienced and had supported the reverence, which shot like

cannons his way. One day the kid sister became an athlete, then an adult. One day this young woman desired the same praise and attention.

"His college games, it was unbelievable, the fans. Cheerleaders and booster clubs and they were wearing buttons with my brother's picture on it. Jerseys with his name on them. You don't get that in Canada. I wanted that.

"I drafted up a letter, got letters of reference, wrote letters to all these colleges. The ones that came back saying 'dear player' - garbage. Anything with my name on it was looked at more carefully, and I sent videotape.

"Nobody recruited me. Anyone can get a scholarship in the States. Anyone. Anyone, I don't care who you are, can get a scholarship to the States.

"I wanted to challenge myself, the local university soccer program just didn't seem like anything. I hate to say it now, but that was my attitude then. I knew all I had to do to play in the CIAU was make a call, whereas the States was a challenge to me."

The challenge, I guess, was in having to draft the letter.

"They send you videotapes of the school and the campus and it was beautiful. It was amazing. Of course, you're drawn to that.... Telling you're going to go to New York on the weekends, not Regina or Lethbridge. I'm flying I am not driving in a bus.

"Of course it is attractive, especially when you're 17-18 years old."

However, upon arrival the realities of athletic life at this school were markedly different. There were problems on the field, having to do with playing time. And problems off the field, problems with the coach, which bled onto the field.

"We're up 10-0 and you're going to put me in for the last five minutes so I can stand in the net. Don't humiliate me. Then it just got to the point where I was tired of the lies, like I was tired of him saying 'yep, this road trip you're going to get a game in.' I never got a single game in. I never started a single game for that team. I can respect seniority, but when it's a team where it's obvious we're going to win, put me in. Not with five minutes left. Why bother?"

"The soccer wasn't doing well, but beyond that probably 50 per cent of our team was undecided majors - which means they were taking scuba, tennis, aerobics, um, you name it that's what they were taking.

"I had no idea, and the first night you're there they push the whole 'you're a student first and an athlete second, and always remember 'you're here to get an education'; well, bullshit. I'm sure the Dean cared, but the coach didn't. He didn't care. He wanted a successful team because he likes to see his face in the paper, and he wants to keep his job."

"30 per cent on my team were Education students, which is a joke there. My roommate was an education student; I know what they do. Like, laminating is the big project. She would study for exams the morning of the exam and she was an a-student. She'd be sitting in front of the TV on her beanbag studying for an exam for half-an-hour before an exam, and she is an a-student? They didn't put in much time.

"The other 20 per cent were in athletic therapy. Basically, they were learning how to tape ankles, and that's about it.

"They have study hall, but we would all go and sit around and talk and joke around. You couldn't study even if you wanted to in study hall. It was too noisy. They don't care. They just do all of these things so that when the NCAA is checking

their eligibility, they can say they do study hall for the athletes and are playing by the rules. They didn't care what my marks were, only that I was eligible to play.

"I was the only one on the team in Pre-Medicine and pre-Dentistry. It's not possible to do both. And they preached 'student-athlete, student-athlete', and it's all crap. They didn't care. Here I am 18 years old, living far away from home, the whole team is going out to the clubs to party, and I'm going to stay in and study on weekends when we're in town - no.

"Then, a typical day - I'm in class at eight, then a full day, let's say you're done at three. If you have any kind of injury at all, you're in the training room at two, in the whirlpool, being taped, doing whatever they want you to do. On the field at three, warming up, we'd practice 'til six. Sometimes we'd go 'til seven, then it's dark, and we'd often do wind sprints until we got sick. I threw up probably about three times from working out. I've never done that at any other time in my life."

"The cafeteria closes at 6:30pm. You're living in residence, you eat in the cafeteria. You sprint from the field to the cafeteria, then you rush to your room, you shower, and you change - who wants to study after a day like that? I was busted. I couldn't study. I was a good student in high school, and I couldn't study. And weekends on the road, I'm in New York City, you think I'm going to stay in my hotel room and study biochemistry? I'm 18 years old, I want to see Chicago, I want to see LA, I want to see St. Louis. I'm not going to sit in the hotel while everybody goes out. My marks were stinking, and I was on academic probation.

"But to miss a practice because of chem. exams that if I don't pass I fail the course, you wouldn't even ask. If you were sick and missed practice, you had to

have a doctor's note. That's expensive in the States....constant everyday boot camp."

Interesting that you had to have a doctor's note to miss practice, which was perceived to be an act close to mutiny, but missing class was as easy as not showing up.

"The only day that was light training was the day before a game, and that's when we would do the tick-tack-toe, just go through plays over and over. That was the only day we didn't sprint, the day before a game. Otherwise, we sprinted.....if you're not pulling your weight, they're right up your ass. It's meant in a positive manner, but it's intense.

"I had all of these drills that I had never seen.

"He'll say whatever you want to hear. My parents flew down to Miami. Did I play? We won 15-0. Did I play? He is a con artist, and I think some of the best coaches are con artists. The ones who can get the good players are con artists.

"I don't trust coaches.

The principal selling point for Jen in deciding to attend this particular university was being given the assurance she would start in Division One women's soccer. She wanted to start and be a star, like her brother. The coach substantiated his position often: she was his goalkeeper. Then the previous starting goalkeeper came to camp after a summer of training and losing a significant amount of weight. This impressed the coach, and though Jen was game-ready and in fine shape herself, the rules changed and she sat. She sat and stewed.

"You don't have anybody to turn to when you're there. Soccer is a small part of your life.

"We were told what to eat on the road. We were not allowed to have pop. I wasn't a big pop drinker anyway, but we weren't allowed to have pop. We weren't allowed to have hamburgers or fries. We were told what we could have off the menu, how much, when to eat, how much you could have.

"One morning we're meeting and deciding where everyone wanted to go, and I put up my hand to stay. I didn't feel like going anywhere. I just wanted to watch TV in the hotel. Nope. For the rest of the road trip I had to follow the coach - I sat at his table, and I was just a bitch to him because I didn't care. No one liked him on that team. There wasn't a single player who liked him.

"He wasn't good at constructive criticism. He ripped people and made them cry. I was, like all of a sudden the big hero on the team and all accepted. Really like in with the seniors."

Jen is not afraid to speak her mind. When she did to the coach, he responded with consternation, while the team responded with consideration: her courage over his callousness struck a common chord. It was the first time anyone had taken a stand, which proved to assist Jen's confidence at a fragile and confusing time in life.

"I was sitting on the sidelines actually hoping we would get scored on."

"I'm not dumb enough to waste four years of my life without coming out with some kind of degree. It was probably the middle of November I decided I have to go home and get an education. After that I didn't go to class at all. Nothing transferred not a single thing. After the season was over we were getting (drunk) every night, and I lay by the pool all-day and partied all night. I thought I am going to make the most of this experience now.

"I wanted an education, and that's why I came home, because the education part wasn't happening. If I could do it again, I would have gone for a year, taken an undecided major, and just enjoyed the experience. I would have written a year off of my education, not worried about it.... enjoyed playing the high-level of competition, seeing places, incredible places every weekend.

"The media attention, the game programs, the autobiographies. I don't regret going, but I don't regret coming home.

"Confidence is key as a goaltender, and I came home worse than when I left. And I was playing well there, until I figured out it doesn't matter how well I play, I'm not getting in anyway. And then - BOOM - downhill."

The athlete who returned from only two semesters – one-and-a-half, actually – was much different than the athlete who left. The athlete thought she would continue the family tree of college athletic success. That tree was cut because, basically, she was cut. However, her cut was worse because the coach held scholarship over her and as a trump card.

"I didn't trust coaches after I came back. I was trusting, but I figured out pretty quickly they don't give a shit about you as a person, they just give a shit about winning. It doesn't matter to them.

"For the first summer of my life I had a summer. It just kind of carried with me.

"This is the first time I've really talked about it."

Jen is living proof of the benefits of qualitative research. She talked and I learned. In the end she felt relieved and I felt shock.

"I wouldn't give back the experience. I can tell my grandchildren I went on a scholarship to the States. That's pretty cool. On a resume it looks great...It stands out. It's amazing. It's part of who I am now, but if I could do it again I would have gone just for the soccer.

"There were many costs, but I would do it again."

To potential recruits: "Talk to someone who has gone, preferably talk to someone who has been to that university, and not someone who the coach tells you to talk to.

"Ask other coaches what they think of the coach you are going to play for. Most people will tell you what they think.

"I do believe there are people out there who aren't just out to screw people.

"Figure out in your mind what you are going there for. What is important to you. If it's 50-50 soccer and athletics don't go, because it's not going to happen. If it is a big soccer school, it's not going to happen. If you're going for the experience, go, don't worry about academics and feel it out for the year and don't waste your time

"Don't go there expecting to be a student-athlete, because you won't be.

"The Americans know how to do it right as far as the show, but that doesn't mean that everything underneath the show is right."

The veneer of the NCAA experience in some situations veils its inside - day-to-day operations. Once inside, sometimes the veneer seems far from shiny. I understand now the rush of reality Jen and others experienced from the crush of being mistreated were both shocking and unplanned obstacles to a life previewed, packaged and sold as being exceptional.

CASE NINE – JANINE TAYLOR: Speaking with Janine Taylor, 21, is serious business.

She broods, generally, and seems to think hard. It was not hard to tell she did not have a positive experience in the United States. When Janine was in her senior year of high school in a suburban eastern Canadian bedroom community she was approached by a soccer recruiter and asked if she wanted to play Division One in the United States.

Basically, it was framed from the no-effort-to-get-the-big ticket perspective – essentially just agree and everything will be taken of. Intrigued, and why not?, Janine had not considered the United States to be an option; however, choosing it began an exercise in acrimony.

“Going to the States was something cool to do - but it wasn’t like a dream of mine. It was something I didn’t have to work for - it just fell into my lap. On the forms I got (from the American College), they said to please send a videotape, but the recruiter said don’t worry about it. The coach travelled to Canada for one weekend. I really didn’t have to go out of my way to impress anybody.”

The deal was quickly sealed. Janine was going to the United States. The ease of her situation produced difficulty - she wasn’t ready for flurries of change.

“Once I actually found out it was for real it was scary thinking about leaving your life here and tying up loose ends. I went through a lot of stress because I think I wasn’t prepared for it. I wasn’t thinking about it for two years in advance, and it was two months in advance.”

The recruiter did his part, perhaps his job, expertly upselling the virtues of attainable experience.

"He said the athletic world in the United States is a whole different world than it is here. The NCAA is practically like a professional league on its own. He said 'It's going to be so exciting'. He said our games would be taped, with big crowds - it was a motivating factor. I think that was the main time when he would tell us what a big deal it was."

So, how could she, then 18, not go on an expense-paid recruiting trip? Janine said marketing was on high during her recruiting visit.

"We were introduced to two players on the team, who turned out to be the two best players. I don't know if that was done on purpose. It probably was because they wanted us to like what we saw.

"We got to meet the guys team, and they were all awesome soccer players.... When I think back, it's easy for me to think things were planned. On our recruiting trip we went right to the centre of the city...really big flashy lights, ate at a nice restaurant, I mean, it's just all of the little tricks they play and work on. I never went back to the centre of the city - it's pretty far from campus, and I didn't have a car. People were just sitting on the side of the street playing music. At the time, I thought that's how things were going to be. After a couple of months, you realize it's just like any other city.

I found this most interesting. The cities which host NCAA universities are usually populous places we watch from Canada on cable television and observe as settings in Hollywood movies. These places are *out there* in the undiscovered. However, once there, the experience becomes familiar - cities are cities. One

significant difference, however, lies in the fact that if and when crime or unrest takes place one cannot just change the channel. The remote becomes the intimate.

"At first it was exciting because everything was new. The city itself, though, I don't think I really liked it. It wasn't anything great. There was a lot of racism there, and that bothered me a lot. We were told by people not to talk to the black people. I had never experienced anything like that before. It really bothered me."

Racism at her school and within her city was tough to miss, and impossible to mistake. She spoke of classmates who encouraged her not to speak with black students. She didn't get to know any black students, due in large measure to athletic and academic commitments. The feeling – of discomfort, of not understanding what was going on around class and around the field - was all-too well known.

"The crimes - every night you could hear the sirens. There was a lot of stuff that was left out during the recruiting trip."

This is a popular sentiment. Perhaps the assumption by these and other young student-athletes is an American school, by their attention and willingness to spend money, has thoughts and feelings of the athlete in mind. In chapter one I wrote of NCAA sport as business. This logic suggests scholarship negotiation, through recruits, is not always an above-board process of integrity. It is about closing deals.

Janine's Americanised world was neither dreamy nor rosy. A new first-year program in the United States, her school was building from the ground-up. That meant growing pains - competitive catastrophe, actually. The program was, in her mind "bush", after she was given every assurance and lead to believe it was established and would win.

"I was worried about my place on the team...and then the first practice came and this one girl from Norway was wearing big white runners, and two others girls on the team were like 'oh, we didn't know we had to have cleats.'

"By looking at people you can tell what athletes look like. I saw a few. And then there were other ones who just didn't look like they were athletes. And that was the first hint - I remember walking home the first night thinking 'I wonder what they're going to be like.'"

There were three Canadians on the team. In most drills the Canadians demonstrated. She said the level of play was less than high school.

"I definitely feel that I was misled because it doesn't take a soccer genius to figure out you can kick a ball or you can't kick a ball, and a lot of them on that team couldn't. That's what the first practice was - teaching people not to toe-punt the ball. That is something we learned in under-10 and under-12 (provincial) years."

Janine had learned skills at her Division One, first-year team that she learned years earlier from an amateur provincial coach. This fact is interesting, considering competitive situations and college sport, perceptually, were thought to be the same. Not so, it would seem.

"I was expecting it to be much more strict, but it was like a big fun thing to do. I didn't have a very good season, and think that is because I wasn't motivated. I mean I could have a really bad game and the coach would pull me aside and say 'you know you could have a really bad game and still start every game.' He said 'you have to change that attitude, you have to pretend that if you play bad you're going to sit on the bench.' But that inner motivation, it just wasn't there. I would just get lazy. I wouldn't be as determined to chase my man after I had lost the ball."

It was problematic for Janine to be the best player on a bad team. A free education and status within her team could not hide the fact and frustration – it could allow her to play her own game, chart her own progress. She became complacent, but, overall, things weren't all bad.

"Experiencing the whole American thing is fun. I mean, I couldn't believe all of the free things we got.

"You get free everything. We got a lot of short cuts. We never had to buy our own books. We'd just turn in a list of books to some people and they would go and put it together for us. Other people would have to wait in line, but none of the athletes would have to do that. We had a special area that we went to. Just little frills like that.

"There wasn't really that big of crowds. But just how seriously everything was taken. Just the fact that in our classes and stuff the professors would be like 'oh, you're athletes. That's good. Do our school proud.' It was a big deal to be an athlete there. That's what I think about sometimes. I miss the special attention we got."

But special attention did not veil Janine's understanding that chasing the ideal college soccer experience was fantasy.

"I started getting lonely and homesick, and spent less time worrying about school and spent more time making long distance phone calls and going out at night because I was upset and depressed that I was away from home. I just didn't find enough good things about the experience to stay motivated.

"I've played on teams (in Canada) where everybody on the team has been better than me, and the only choice you have is to work twice as hard so that you

can have a spot on the bench. And sometimes I think that's what I need. Basically in the States I didn't have to work."

"I got concerned. I thought I couldn't see this team all of a sudden improving over the next couple of years. He was working so hard to get recruits, but then it would fall and it wouldn't happen, and I saw this happen with about four or five girls, and then I thought 'ok, he can't get any recruits.' This was supposed to be the big deal, the big soccer scholarship to the States, and, I mean, I'm playing some of the worst soccer that I've ever played in my life, and I'm still getting awards on the team.

"If the soccer had been challenging I would have been more focused. I could just show up for the practices. It came out in my playing how deflating it was."

So Janine made the obvious but tough decision. She broke rank and headed home. But home had changed, too, from supportive to questioning. Talking to family, to friends, to everyone, was a chore, for a time.

"It was a big blow to my self-esteem. When I came back the people were like 'how could you do that? How could you give up an opportunity like that?' I heard it so many times. I was depressed when I came back.

"When people would ask me it wasn't something I could just tell them in ten seconds. I had to have a half-an-hour conversation with everybody just to explain the whole situation because I didn't want there to be rumors. The best rumor was that I got in a physical fight with my roommate and that's why I came back.

"I have this role model in my life. He said a move to the States would be a smart decision for me to make...(and) having him disappointed in me was very hard to swallow. My parents were disappointed in me. Unless I am doing something

outstanding, I am not meeting their expectations. Their expectations have now become really high because they have seen I had the potential to go to the States. Now it's not enough for them, and it's partly not even their fault. They just want me to reach my highest potential. That's an emotional rollercoaster I am going through right now at home."

Janine continued in increasingly strained tones about her parents' disappointment. She not only had to overcome her own guilt, but also the hegemonic perception that "making it" to the United States was akin to "making it" in life. This was the steepest challenge. She felt like a loser.

"Sometimes I think if I hadn't gone to the States they would have been just as proud of me to go to school in Canada, because my brothers are older than me and neither of them even graduated from high school. That's the biggest deal for me right now - the disappointment my parents have.

"They're going to try and hide my experience from a lot of people. I just can't believe it that my experience was so different than what I expected in terms of the soccer, and how I had no clue that that was going to happen."

Overall, Janine reiterated her experience was not entirely negative. However, she is scarred:

"I really tried not to be biased when I would talk about what happened to me. I met the most amazing people there. I had a lot of fun there, but I had to keep in mind I went down there for the soccer. I didn't go down there to hang out in little pubs when I am only 18 years old and you have to be 21 to get in. Those were the things I remember. It wasn't the soccer experience. It's hard for me to sound positive when I'm talking about the soccer team. I was upset that I didn't know

about the level of skill and I was trying to be honest (when asked). Sometimes being honest..."

Sometimes honesty reveals a person's essence.

"It can't be expected that the team will tell the new recruits that the team won't be very strong, but at the same time, how can they not let them know the level of the team? When you're flying someone 2000 miles away from their home how can you not be with something as big as that? I think I deserved to know more."

Since her experience, Janine worked as a waitress and returned to university in Canada, the one geographically closest to home.

CASE TEN – CRYSTAL HEMMINGWAY: Crystal Hemmingway, similar to each athlete in this study, was among the athletic elite growing up. But Hemmingway also lived a unique experience vicariously – her older sister played Division One soccer on an athletic scholarship in the United States, was athletically gifted, and enjoyed many perks that come with sitting at the table of athletic aristocracy. Hemmingway spoke of her sister sending newsclippings of her college performances. She understood her sister to be larger than life, with the later-blooming athlete wanting in. Crystal's experience was polar – she left the United States angry, bitter, shattered. The experience began innocuously enough. After being scouted at a provincial club tournament, Hemmingway was asked to go on a recruiting trip in 1991.

"He would show me the sights, introduce me to players, told me how good my life would be if I came down, blah, blah, blah. When I was there I was expected to do the same thing for other recruits, but I didn't".

Shortly thereafter Crystal was mailed a scholarship, which she signed and would that September play college soccer in the United States, just like her big sister.

If first impressions are everything, then Crystal should have come home earlier. A terrible storm hit the week of training camp at her Division One western institution. When the coach worked the team through two-a-day training camp despite the clearly inclement, in Crystal's word "dangerous", conditions, she began questioning her situation. This was day two.

"We had no water and no electricity, nothing, so basically we were jumping in the lake everyday to keep clean. They had all of the military out there- it was absolute hell. After a week of complaining the coach brought us to restaurants everyday. They had the military out for the storm. It was hell, and it didn't get any better, but for a whole week we were underfed.

"There was no electricity and the only showers that worked were in the dressingrooms and they only worked for two hours per day. That was the first two weeks. It was hell and it didn't get any better."

This jolt Hemmingway felt over her first impression left lasting negative feelings toward her coach - resentment which has not subsided. Crystal painted a picture of a fiery coach whose principle concern was winning, seemingly at all costs. His motivation manifested itself in verbal barrages towards the team, the likes of which were unfamiliar and shocking to the then-18-year-old forward.

"He would select a player to pick on and then he would yell 'you suck.' He was terrible. It was verbal abuse He would say things like 'I don't even know why you're on this team,' and things like that."

"After one month all these girls had no confidence left, because he would just yell at them, and you're always wondering what he is going to think everytime you touch the ball. He was always yelling and he was always giving us crap."

Despite the frustration, Crystal considered staying in college after her first season, but had deep-seated concerns with her coach, and concerns about the academic credibility of her college.

"I can't complain. I mean, I didn't have much homework to do.

"I knew in December of my first year (the season ended in November) that I was going to return to Canada. When he gave me my academic schedule for January it was all these stupid courses that I didn't think would get me into a Canadian university. So I went to the counselor to change my courses, courses which I thought would be the equivalent to Canada.

"School down there sucks. And he found my schedule and thought it was too hard, and he told me 'there is no way you're going to keep a c-plus average with that.' And I said why not? But I didn't tell him then that I was quitting."

Instead, Hemmingway waited until after a spring-league soccer experience to give her sense true substance. Playing in an exhibition game and out of her natural position, sweeper, after facing three charging forwards a goal-against was scored. Her coach, doubling for this exhibition as game referee, thought the goal was her fault.

"He starts freaking out at me, like yelling '(Hemmingway) what the **** are you doing out there on the field?' He goes 'yah, because you **** suck back there."

Demoralized in front her team in a meaningless game, Hemmingway passionately described storming off the field, but not before clearing the air.

"We had people watching and I was humiliated. My temper flared and I told him off and he told me to go back to the dressingroom and told me I was through. And that is when I told him I don't give a shit - I am going to quit anyways. Then he told me to get the **** off his field. That's how it happened for me

"He told my friends that I hung out with that all I had to do was apologize and he would take me back.

"He just hadn't like the fact that I yelled at him in front of the fans.

"It made me angry, because I wanted to stay in the States. The caliber I played for was great, the soccer was awesome."

Crystal, still with passionate fire in her voice, then detailed difficulties other athletes experienced with the coach, at one point stating "Everybody hated him, but I was the only one who left that year. The year after I think five athletes left."

The year after, she was back in Canada, and sat out on two fronts - athletics, in accordance with CIAU transfer rules, and school, in accordance with personal hurt and confusion over her experience in the United States. After some introspection - thinking, planning, talking to her parents, her sister - Crystal decided to attend university in Canada, and play soccer. Her turnaround resulted in earning an All-Canadian honor, and winning a national championship in her third season as a CIAU athlete.

"It was amazing. It was the best feeling. I really didn't think much about it at the time. We won. We celebrated for two months. But for like soccer career-wise it really didn't do much for me. After I came back from the States I was like 'this is it, I'm playing for fun.'"

However, her feelings toward the United States, even four years after the fact, were intense.

"Having a scholarship is like having a job. They pay you to play and if you don't play to their satisfaction they kick you out because it is their job to win, so they are doing anything they want to try and win."

Crystal offered advice with ease.

"Just make sure you know what you want...I was wondering if my experience means it is like this everywhere – if all coaches are xxxholes. Either go with an attitude where nobody is going to bother you, like 'whatever he says don't listen,' which is hard to do when you're 18, but I mean...."

CASE ELEVEN – GWEN RICHARDS: Gwen Richards was fortunate her American College experience happened to take place in the place her mom called home. It's unfortunate Richards' athletic experience was far from homey.

"It was a totally bad, brutal experience."

A native of eastern Canada, she thrived despite parental divorce. She didn't own everything she wanted, but didn't miss out on much, either. Along the way, Richards found herself in walk-on try-outs with the Division One college in the city of her mother, after she re-married and re-located to the United States.

"It was kind of a bonus to go there and spend time with her and still be able to go to school."

Richards settled at the State University, a Division Two school, after first trying-out with the main Division One university, geographically close and athletically superior. She said the big-school tryout was a washout – token, and did not showcase her talents.

"They had all these American national players there. I was Canadian, and they gave me one try-out. It was three hours long, and I was playing with girls who weren't going to be playing on the university (college) team. It was basically just running. At the end of it they said 'we can offer you a little bit of scholarship. You might never play, you might sit on the bench, but you could play with us.'

"So that (tone change – sarcasm) was my big opportunity.

"I sort of took it that things are not always going to be fair. I thought I would have five or six try-outs, have the chance to meet some of the girls, to play with them, rather than to play with a bunch of people that aren't even my level. That really taught me that things would not be fair.

"I went home and was so upset. There was no way I was going to go somewhere and sit on the bench for a year."

Richards didn't sit. She acted, went across-town to the other division, and entered another world.

"At the time the program was new, so they weren't offering tons of money. I think I got basically the same deal as everybody else, and then my parents paid the rest. The second year, whether I was going to go back or not, was when they would

have offered the big money. Anyway, they offered me what everybody else was offered. My tuition that year was 10,000 dollars. I stayed with my mom.”

And mom no doubt heard all about the experience of her misplaced Canadian daughter, an athlete who could never seem to grasp her situation or its culture. It is interesting that throughout this study the role of the coach eerily becomes the role of He, some omnipresent, strict, unforgiving, inattentive or otherwise damaging, destructive Higher Power.

“He was more-than-happy to have me there, and I fit right in, and everything was great. At the beginning everything was ok.”

Then things started to be not ok. Not black and awful, just not ok. Her coach seemed not to notice her.

“I think I made one girlfriend there initially, but the rest of the girls I found to be different. I don’t know how to explain American women. My mom found this in her experience, that they’re just really different. They think Canadians are weird or something, I swear. Like you’ll make a joke or say something, not necessarily a joke, or make some kind of comment where a Canadian would be rolling over laughing, and they look at you like you’re totally out to lunch.”

A gap in comedic understanding paled against her lack of athletic recognition, with Richards thinking that was far from funny. She felt she was underappreciated for her efforts.

(It is important to note that throughout our interviews I did not find her to be arrogantly self-interested.)

“I enjoyed my time there. I enjoyed the setting. I guess what I didn’t like was that I was – I don’t know how to say this – probably the best player on the

team and I didn't get any credit. When news would come, it would be on someone else. It's not that I need those things to live off of – I don't thrive off of being interviewed or anything. It was because I was never even considered as someone to look at."

Attention deficit in a social setting, whether real or imagined, typically produces a reaction. Richards' was bitterness.

"They had all of this voting for all stars. I'd never scored so many goals in my entire career. In the entire league I was one of the top scorers - I think about five or six points ahead of anyone on my team and in the top-five in the whole league, and then they had all these all stars. I think they had 12 and I wasn't one of them.

"To this day I don't know if it was because I was Canadian or what. I just didn't get that same recognition. I think that it was when all the news and all the media was around and all of that was when I sort of felt like almost hurt that everyone else was being recognised and I wasn't."

Recognition followed her to Canada, where, after sitting out one season, she played for the local university team and two seasons later won a national championship.

"On the team I play on in Canada when someone is playing well that is the person the media talks to. You would think that would happen in the States, but it didn't. Is it only because I was Canadian, or what?

"I think by the end my decision to leave was because I was just sick of not getting the credit. I can't really explain it. I don't need it to play well, I don't need it to thrive off of, to make me feel confident. But I think you get to a point where

enough is enough. You feel shafted, that when they are doing these big media things, you know, who really deserves to be there?"

She left after one season.

"Then it was funny, because when I was ready to make my decision to go I decided to leave, all of a sudden I was the cat's meow. I was everything. They were offering me more money, and they really really wanted me there. I sort of thought 'forget it.'"

"To me it's like a mystery. At the time, my parents were more mad, because they could see the political end of it and I couldn't. I couldn't understand, I was just upset. Now when I look at it I can see it. They were really pissed off. They couldn't fathom how someone could go in there and do what I had done - and it was a new program - we ended up getting second - we did really really well - and like I knew in my mind that I was a big part of that."

There was a dramatic shift in perspective later that same interview.

"I know this sounds like it was all an awful experience but I learned more that year about soccer than I ever have. I really enjoyed the experience, but these were the side-things that happened. I sort of felt that my coach, he would be the one who hooked up the media if someone came, like my coach does in Canada. I couldn't understand why he didn't think I deserved an interview, or whatever, so I sort of thought it came from him. Then at the end, when it was all said and done, he said I was the best player, the best person to come through their university, when I was ready to leave."

From feeling mistreated to being treated like the best player, Gwen could not make sense of her experience.

"What I found hard was that there is such a difference in sports in America than there is Canada. We got like 4,000 people in the States. I remember a game where we got 6000, that was when we were playing the first-place team. And here we're lucky if we get 60 fans. That's part of it, like I was said, because there is a whole different meaning to sports.

"My mom lived down the street from a high school, and you'd drive by these games and there would be 500-1000 people. We don't even get that for university football in Canada. I mean it's sad because I think on a whole Canadians are better athletes, more rounded talent, you know?

Academically, in Richards' mind there is no question she is in the right place.

"School-wise I always thought that it was important I get a degree from Canada. That's really what's important, it's not about soccer."

3.3 CANADIAN GRADUATES OF THE NCAA

CASE TWELVE – GENEVIEVE DUNSMUIR: Genevieve Dunsmuir knew she was good and, so, as a result, she held out, like so many other athletes who think the world is a free lunch waiting to happen.

"Because I was a hot-head and I told my mom that I wasn't going to go to university if I didn't go the States, and that I was going to move to Toronto just so I could play soccer. And my mom wanted most for me to go to university."

It was the late 1980's. Dunsmuir's parents wanted badly for their daughter to attend university, somewhere, anywhere. She was stubborn, and insistent – the United States or bust. They borrowed money and incurred large debt to grant their oldest daughter her wish, a Division One school try-out as a walk-on, no guarantees,

high risk, high cost. The family flew her there at their risk. Her sheer athleticism took care of the rest.

"I ended up having a scholarship. I scored three goals in the first two games. There was a girl that was supposed to be really good and she had a full scholarship, but I took her position and she sat on the bench. And she quit, so I got her scholarship. I was 19 years old."

And that is the way things were. Finite resources. Few scholarships. She was in and the other girl was out. This gave Genevieve no pause.

"I was loving life. I was doing everything I wanted to do. I was playing really well. I mean it was great. I set goals for myself and just go after them...that was my goal to go there no matter what. It may be better now, but then it wasn't."

A shift seems to have taken place in the giving and game of scholarship, particularly for Canadians. In the late 1980s, I gather, the NCAA collective had little knowledge and an even sparser interest in Canadian talent on its rosters. It was not easy to get the attention of coaches, and some of their scholarship money. Genevieve's situation is noteworthy because she, perhaps directly, paved the way for attention to be paid towards Canada and its women's soccer system. She did this because she took a risk.

"Everyone you talked to said the US was so much better, and the US team was so much better than the Canadian team, and I just wanted the best."

She enjoyed the best, to an extent, but team, financial or personal accomplishment came despite a lack of coaching. Or maybe they came just to spite him.

"He was probably the worst coach I have ever seen, in every way. You know how sometimes you have a coach that you don't like or he's not that great but you respect him, or he makes the players respect him. Well, this coach, he didn't make us respect him. I mean we had no respect for him as a person or as a coach. He was an xxxhole. He couldn't even kick a soccer ball.

"He knew nothing about the game. You talk about basics; he didn't even know anything about the basics. He would run out on the field and yell at us to 'run, run.' I mean, he couldn't even say 'mark your man' or 'goalside' or whatever.

"He was a men's soccer coach, and they kicked him out. And they had to start women's sport because of the law - Title IX - so they just took him and made him the coach. But he was an excellent recruiter. He got very good players to go there. He was a very good bullxxxxxx."

I cannot help but think of closing deals. Car salesmen make their livelihood closing deals, also.

"We had awesome players. We just didn't have a coach. We had one of the best teams in the country. I remember that because the coach was that way, our team was very close. We had to stick together..We would go to the practice and make ourselves practice because we knew we could win the championship. It was a goal of the whole team.

"The first couple years I was the youngest so I just went along with others, and just played. After that, when I was one of the oldest.....when I was there first the older girls were the ones who were trying to get him out. They would go complain. Then I started doing that, too, when I got older. Especially in my last year, and that hurt me a lot.

"We had gotten the whole team to go to the athletic director to try and kick him out, and it didn't work because his winning record was too good - they couldn't do anything. But then he found out that I was one of the ones who were organizing it, so I sat on the bench a lot.

"It has changed a lot since we were there. Now the coaching has improved."

Dunsmuir's situation didn't. Her playing time already cut because of heated politics, her career went cold during a playoff game.

"I can't play anymore. I hurt my back and my hip, and every time I try to train, I can hardly walk. About six months ago my whole leg went numb. I damaged the nerve. I don't even know how, it just happened."

She gave up playing her senior season.

"It is still pretty hard. If it were up to me, I wouldn't have gotten hurt and would still be playing soccer.

"I think it's just been recently when I have accepted it. Everytime I watch the Olympics or something I am trying to figure out what else I could do. I guess right now I'm just playing golf, and everytime I play I just try to get better and better. It's that competitiveness. That feeling to just get better is still there, in anything I do, pretty much."

Dunsmuir, now in her 30's, met a man and married shortly after calling it a career. She has a child now and a permanent address in the United States, a residence not far from where it all began.

"We do some camping now, surfing - we keep busy.

"Sometimes it's hard. My husband is American, and with jobs and everything, it is easier here, but I like the Canadian mentality better. It's more towards the outdoors, more simple."

Though she graduated and remains in the United States as a direct result of her intercollegiate experience, Genevieve still cannot get used to the difference in values between Canada and her current home.

"How are they? They're American. I guess they have this mentality that they are the best in anything. That can drive you crazy when you know it is not always true. But sometimes I think Canada should be that way more. They are really proud of their country. They always seem to think they are the best.

"America is the most advanced country in the world, in terms of technology, but when you come down here in the south and it's still so, I don't want to say backwards, but ...it's really like old-fashioned."

Dunsmuir's experience in the United States was risky, up, down, but recently became settled despite these difficulties. Her take, though, on the college experience in the United States was guarded.

"I would tell them about my situation where the level of soccer is great, but to be ready for a lot of politics, especially if they have a bad coach. When there is money involved, the politics is involved too. And, I guess, just try to stay out of it and play your game and enjoy it. I think if someone would approach me now I could tell him or her which schools to go to.

"If I am a good player and a Canadian university approaches me and offers me nothing, and an American school, where the soccer is great offers me money, I wouldn't even hesitate. Because you have paid school plus great soccer.

"You talk about thousands of dollars to go to school, paid for."

CASE THIRTEEN – LINDA JACKSON: For years, seven now, Linda Jackson has been out of the college loop. However, after receiving a BSc in Food Science from a well-known Division One institution in the American Midwest, and enjoying the fruits of high-level success in America, Jackson had no inhibitions about supporting the American college system.

Linda Jackson enjoyed early success in high school, becoming aware of American College scholarship opportunities through soccer magazines and soccer newspapers. She was a full scholarship sight unseen athlete at a time when American college scholarships were the rare exception in Canada.

"Before I went on the recruiting trip I was told there was little money available, but at the end of the recruiting trip, about one hour before I was to depart for home, he (the coach) told me the athletic department had decided to award me a full scholarship. I believe he wanted to hold out as long as he possibly could."

She became animated when discussing her American College experience.

"It seemed almost like a vacation. Being on the university team was a big deal – it was a big institution – and it was almost like you were put on a pedestal a little bit. It seemed like they tried to accommodate the athletes, probably a lot more than the students, by setting up schedules so we were able to make it to games and practices and so on. Probably by twelve-noon everyday were done all of our classes. Athletes were catered to."

She worked soccer camps during the summers and played on a full scholarship the rest of the year.

"On my (college) team I saw everybody all of the time – I ate and went to class with the same people, so it was easy to develop relationships off of the field. I played in a good situation for a team. I thought it made the players closer, and a close team off the field makes for a better team on the field."

Jackson's athletic experience included three All-American honors, which is interesting considering she was not and is not American. Along the way, she witnessed first-hand new recruits having a less-than-ideal experiences.

"The personalities of the players and coaches maybe conflict, and I think that is probably the biggest thing. I think sometimes it turns out to be what they don't expect it will be. Maybe they are not as good a player as expected, and either end up not playing or not playing as much. I always say that you could be a great player in your city, but when you go to university you have to understand it's an environment of the best-of-the-best. I think it's a humbling experience for a lot of people"

The experience seemed anything but humbling for Jackson.

"I just feel that if you're not able to help out your team, or be one of the better players, then you are just like any average person – nobody knows you...It either happens for you and you enjoy it – it was a good thing for you – but if it was the opposite then it is usually the opposite. It's pretty cutthroat, I'd say.

"But in the States there is money to help the athletes out, which is only going to make better athletes."

No surprise, then, Jackson feels strongly about Canadian universities' lack of scholarship willingness.

"That's where to start - offer some money. There is money being offered now, but it doesn't compare. For one thing, if scholarships were available, I think a lot more athletes would stay in Canada...Before I went away to the States I heard about other athletes in other sports going away on scholarships. At the time, I don't think any scholarships were being offered in Canada.

"I think money is the big thing, and I think it starts at the high school level. In high school you have all these kids striving to get scholarships - they know they can get scholarship if they excel. It makes the atmosphere so much more competitive. Obviously the players are going to be better."

But while Jackson got better through the NCAA experience, being Canadian has meant a lonely existence on the sponsorship front, a front every bit as important to today's elite athlete as competition. In some cases across many sports it seems endorsements rule – Shaquille O'Neal trumpeting he just wanted to wear Reeboks, drink Pepsi and have fun after signing a 100-million dollar contract with the Los Angeles Lakers comes to mind as an example. Not so for Linda Jackson.

"In Canada I received some recognition...but I am not as recognized. I am not saying I should receive or expect to receive sponsorships but I'm stating that other US women's soccer players, who have accomplished a lot less than I have, are being sponsored and endorsed by athletic companies simply because sports in America is a much bigger deal than sports in Canada. It can be frustrating."

The Canadian system also continues to frustrate Jackson, both as one-time participant and contemporary observer.

"Something has got to work out better. Maybe from the youth level on up. The developmental system has to be better. For some reason, it seems to me you just don't find really skilled players in Canada. There are probably a lot of good players in Canada, but they just need to be developed.

"I improved because I went away to the States...Today I am a better player than I was back then."

Today she is settled in Chicago and more opinionated.

CASE FOURTEEN – LESLIE ADAMS: On a cold small-town western Canadian winter day in 1971 a future NCAA women's soccer graduate and current Division One coach came to be. Leslie Adams was taught to think about others and strive for excellence. Her parents were sternly supportive - there for a ride somewhere or a cheer anywhere – and always just there.

An undergraduate degree in hand from the United States, a masters degree nearly complete, and full-time employment have made the United States home, virtually since beginning scholarship-funded studies in a quaint Midwestern postcard city in 1990. It was there the world opened.

"Actually my father had a big role in that...it was closer, I guess. The education part was ranked number-one in the country. And it was a smaller school....

"...I was playing for a Canadian club team and the coach took us to a tournament, which is a big tournament in the United States. After I returned from

the tournament I received five or six phone calls from different colleges, and that's when it kind of opened up (in my mind) that there was school outside of Canada.

"From there I kind of started going on recruiting trips, you know visiting places, and then it became a priority because at that time if I had stayed home and had my university paid for in Canada, with my family helping me financially, it would have been difficult. I probably would have taken a year off to work and then try to go to university. So now it became four years of education paid for and I could play something I loved.

"I think I was in utter shock that there was another world out there, of things to experience, and how much of a priority athletics was over academics. I grew up in a very academic oriented family. They were supportive.

"We are a very close family, so they didn't want me to leave for that perspective. It was an opportunity to play at that level...I think going away actually put me where I am now, just from the increase in the level of play.

"It wasn't culturally shocking.... I think the thing was the first time being away from home, and being independent. I was being paid for my academics and athletics, which ultimately means I was being paid to perform for the university. It became a routine, which was different from the lifestyle I had had.

"I had a great experience. I had probably one of the best collegiate experiences, but as a coach I can see where some players get messed up. But I didn't. I had a coaching staff who committed to me regardless (injury).... They went as far as when I graduated in four years - my program was a five-year program - they created an academic scholarship for me in my fifth year, and awarded it to me,

and paid my fifth year school even though I wasn't playing soccer for them. I was taken care of very well.

"I had professors who worked around the clock for me, or allowed me to do make-up exams.

"Where in some schools you won't get that - I am at a school where it is very tough to get my student-athlete out of a class. It varies in where you are.

"All this didn't come without struggle. I had to work for everything I've got. I mean, there were times when I thought 'I want to leave and go home' because, you know, things aren't going right. I was at a school where they were there for me."

As coach, and as product of the American College system, Adams now endeavors to lead by example.

"It's frustrating, because being a head coach is a big responsibility because it's the experience of the athlete, not anyone else's. I think a lot of universities take it in the reverse way - 'I need to protect my job so I'm going to do what I need to do' - but I take it the other way. If I'm not giving you your experience, which college is supposed to be the greatest time of your life, then there is something wrong, you know?

"I handle coaching here great now, but I'll tell you that a couple of years ago I struggled. At some points, I still struggle, because I am highly ethical about things, and I have a hard time to get into the American ego, cheating, sometimes, competitiveness. If I recruited a kid and this isn't where they wanted to be because it doesn't fit them, I'll help them go elsewhere, versus telling them things just to keep them here. I have actually released a player from my collegiate team because

to me she appeared not to be happy, and got a scholarship offer from another university.

"If you give them a good experience they are going to be successful for you.

"You may get there and they haven't told you something. You know, there are some schools that I know recruit based upon the facility but they really don't play there. Or they are told they will have their scholarship for four years, and a coach really can't legally say that, because on the contract it says scholarship are annually renewable, so at the end of a year they can opt to just leave you. So you need to get to a place that's safe and really check things before you, sometimes I call it, signing your life away. Just make sure you research everything."

The coach seemed well versed on two fronts: a) her love of Canada, b) the problems of amateur women's soccer and amateur athletics in Canada.

"The biggest problem I see is that we need to make a commitment not to participate, but to choose to compete. It's the whole image you see of Canada, like down here everybody says 'oh yah, Canadians, they are so nice, they are so nice, everyone is so friendly.' It's a country where everybody is a friend and we are really our own enemies. What school offers any opportunity for scholarships? It all comes down to a money issue.

"Either we compete or we don't. That's the battle we have at the collegiate level. The United States doesn't choose to participate, they choose to be the best at what they are doing, and they fund it to do it. There is no middle ground, and Canada is always stuck in the middle ground.

"Americans view themselves as winners, and they invest that money into quality athletes. In Canada, they struggle financially in terms of supporting athletic programs.

"I view Canadian universities as academic schools, not athletic schools.

"But it's hard to let go. It's just hard. That's where you're from, your family.

The American college system works for some, but even the coach, for whom the system worked, is keenly aware of buyer-beware.

"I would tell them to make sure that, if they are looking at a particular institution/school, to make sure they are fully educated, particularly on the academic side and on the NCAA side. Make sure that they have an understanding of all the rules and options, and not to dive in - basically because if you look at any school in the States you're like 'oh my god, you know, heaven, look at the facilities.' You know, that is actually the downfall of things, because it's a catcher but it can kill you."

Adams is alive, well, educated and employed in the United States.

Chapter Four

ANALYSIS

The individual perspectives of the 14 Canadian women's soccer student-athletes were, as to be expected, varied. Some surveyed their experience as growth, in either potential or real terms. Others believed their growth was stunted through the NCAA experience, some with dreams dashed and confidences shattered. Others expressed disappointment towards a Canadian sport system that made them feel lost in the shuffle. Others found the cultural experience of America less-than-enjoyable but the competition second-to-none. American culture, including US intercollegiate culture and extending to general American sport culture, is a unique experience, very different from its Canadian equivalent at all levels. From the perspective of intercollegiate sport, the important distinctions include special attentions and entitlements, financial assistance and coaching. Everyone noticed the experience brought big changes in their lives; this growth was not limited to playing soccer in the United States.

The Canadian women's soccer student-athlete groups, each with varying degrees of NCAA experience, bring their specific experiences to their assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the American system. The athletes who participated in the NCAA and left, for example, clearly did so because aspects of their experience left them deeply unsatisfied. The first-year group, having little general life experience outside the familiar, yearned for new challenges. However, despite these divergent life situations, there were several commonalities in the thoughts and reflections shared with me. After transcribing each interview, I measured trends, threads of common thought and common understanding shared

across situations. These common thoughts form the foundation of this chapter. The following is a thematic summary of the thoughts expressed by Canadian women's soccer athletes who elected to attend a NCAA institution to further their athletic and academic endeavors. Six themes emerged from 14 minds, expressed in rank order using universality of sentiment and expressed emotion as a guide. I have grouped sentiments and ideas that were expressed in individual ways.

4.1 "WE GET SPECIAL ATTENTION"

When first planning this research my hypothesis principally imagined athletes who were primarily concerned with athletic scholarships - funds not available in Canada to cover education, and the costs associated with their sport and living. However, I discovered early, and across many of the individuals who participated in this study, that this group of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes were attracted by the recognition and status that commonly is enjoyed by elite varsity athletes in the United States - perhaps moreso than the money which came with it.

The structural differences between the intercollegiate sport systems of the United States and Canada can be reduced to basic elements of scholarship, profile, entitlement, and privilege. Scholarship is the straightforward payment to athletes for athletic services. The profile of intercollegiate sport is greater than in Canada. The individual entitlements afforded student-athletes, in the form of privileges not readily available to the general student body, were regarded more highly than scholarships. Ken Dryden built upon this idea in comparing intercollegiate programs in Canada and the United States. In the United States, Dryden suggests, college athletes on big teams bring money and glory to the school, and are thus treated as something more than just a student. Some are treated like celebrities, a perception, which, no doubt,

is enlivened, personified and picked up through televised images of American college sport. The resultant effect creates similar expectations in the minds of Canadian student-athletes, who see and hear how different things are in America. Yet the simple truth is that these same entitlements are not possible within the Canadian college system, principally because universities in Canada are not about sport to the same degree. In Canada the prime concern is getting a degree.

There are personal gains for NCAA athletes whose athletic efforts benefit not just the sporting public, but also their home university. The athletes in this study spoke passionately and at length, with measures of disbelief, on the entitlements bequeathed them. Prodding was generally required on the topic of money – the nature of their scholarship, costs of education and the portion paid from the family bank account. However, in addressing the perks of playing NCAA women's soccer and of playing in a nation which seems to honor many shapes and sizes of high-level athletes from both genders and from across the sport spectrum, not just hockey players (as can be the case in Canada), they needed no encouragement. If their collective feeling were noise it would be thunder. They spoke reverentially about being in environments that left strong feelings of being a somebody – a B.G.O.C., Big Girl On Campus. These women enthused over privileges, like athletes-only lines at university bookstores, where the sporting set is able to get books in one-sixteenth the time of their less aristocratic classmates:

"You get free everything. We got a lot of short cuts. We never had to buy our own books. We'd just turn in a list of books to some people and they would go and put it together for us. Other people would have to wait in line, but none of the athletes would have to do that. We had a special area that we went to."

They spoke of relatively unfathomable attention from training staff, of playing and practicing in first-class facilities: well lit stadiums, lush grass, palm trees, and of

enjoying greater media attention. These experiences were far from home, and out of this world:

"It seemed almost like a vacation. Being on the university team was a big deal – it was a big institution – and it was almost like you were put on a pedestal a little bit. It seemed like they tried to accommodate the athletes, probably a lot more than the students, by setting up schedules so we were able to make it to games and practices and so on. Probably by twelve-noon everyday we were done all of our classes. Athletes were catered to."

"Down here is a football stadium, a soccer stadium, a basketball stadium, a women's soccer stadium. Average attendance is 1,000 people for soccer games. And how could I turn that down? That's what I want - to be a part of something that's just great."

"Athletes here are widely recognized. They have so many opportunities, like for tutors and stuff. You get free everything for tutors. When you register for classes you don't wait in line, you go straight to the front. To get your books you give them a list and they get them for you. You are just like put on a pedestal almost. Not that I mind..."

"There wasn't really that big of crowds. But just how seriously everything was taken. Just the fact that in our classes and stuff the professors would be like 'oh, you're athletes. That's good. Do our school proud.' It was a big deal to be an athlete there. That's what I think about sometimes. I miss the special attention we got."

Some of these athletes excitedly explained team wrap-up banquets and post-season events unlike anything they experienced in Canada, complete with highlight videos for each athlete to keep as the team and school's means to say, "thanks for your effort." These young women passionately detailed these activities – ways of life and forms of recognition which perhaps not only encourages and preserves loyalty, but a team-building method which places the athlete outside herself into a position and feeling of being part of a larger whole – a somebody. Some Canadians in this study lived righteousness, the noble status afforded semi-professional athletes:

"I always had a heart for Canada, but it's like we always get the tail end of everything. Even though you have heart, it always seems like in the end it's 'ah, well we tried.' I have had enough of that. I wanted that childhood dream, and I didn't have that in Canada, I didn't feel that special feeling that once in your life you will

have, and will always be able to hang on to that...Everyone wants that day of fame or whatever, and I got that.”

However, there is an equally valid but inverse perspective, explained below.

In Canada the opportunity to play intercollegiate sport is considered a privilege:

Within the total athletic program, broad-based high participation programs are being weighed against those in which few students take part. Given the relatively small number of student athletes involved in the intercollegiate program, this debate is an important one for intercollegiate sport. Within the intercollegiate program itself, we are struggling with the question of maintaining program breadth, that is, number of sports, as opposed to concentrating on program quality (Connell in Taylor, 21).

The NCAA can offer a higher quality intercollegiate sport experience. It can also offer an unfair and corrupt sport experience. The experience is nothing like it would be in Canada, because the methods and ideas of the NCAA could not work in Canadian culture. Many of these methods and ideas can only be implemented with money, which NCAA programs have in relative abundance because of tradition and devotion to American college sport, while the other fights to maintain the lowest common denominator: athletic programs. One system is accompanied by a buffet of entitlements; the other system rarely offers even a free lunch. One has large crowds, but not in the book line, while the other plays in relative anonymity. They both have sport, but in one sport events are spectacles, both live and on network television, with much more on the line than victory. These events are difficult to get to, in terms of tickets for big college games, and in terms of playing for the big college teams. If anything, the sport development system of America is focussed on athletes playing on the big teams. Enormous popular attention is focussed on college

games and college athletes can get used to that attention and to the feeling they are someone special.

4.2 Money

The most obvious and unique characteristic of NCAA sport is the granting of athletic-only scholarships. The issue of athletic scholarships is complex in the United States and contentious in Canada. The CIAU voted against supporting a motion granting athletic-only scholarships at its 1998 Annual General Meeting and reaffirmed that stance in 1999. These moves - through the raised, voting hands of athletic directors - reiterated the commitment to education-first values within Canadian universities. Athletics remains extra-curricular. These moves also reconfirm the perception among Canadian elite or elite-aspiring athletes that the United States, if available, offers better competitive environments in a culture where sport and athletes are more highly regarded and clearly more revered than in Canada. This sentiment was spoken, in one form or another, by each of the athletes in this study. They spoke of money from the perspective of how much they received, and how this money allowed them to concentrate on soccer (or partying, in some cases), and how family covered short-falls to create a worry-free experience from the financial viewpoint:

"Here I get food, rent, books, tuition - I don't have to worry about anything. We're not allowed to work because you're a full scholarship athlete. Your job is to play soccer and go to school."

"There was a girl that was supposed to be really good and she had a full scholarship, but I took her position and she sat on the bench. And she quit, so I got her scholarship. I was 19 years old."

"Set with a full scholarship, she was granted admission into a master's program (exercise science) with one season of eligibility remaining, and was given tropical accommodation in a condominium with two bedrooms and two baths. Her experience was far from the starving student - it was wrapped in luxury and

included early respect. The coach spoke with Sera about team leadership before she arrived. 'Some of the athletes will be in their first year and obviously will have other things on their mind besides soccer. I am past that and kind of want to be more of an achiever.'"

"Yah, it's a full academic ride, but it's going to cost me the same amount to go there and pay for room and board and is it would to go here (in Canada, for tuition and books). It's the opportunity – not many people get to do it.

"Her scholarship covered 80 per cent the first year. She estimated the expense in American funds she or her family would have to pay was in the order of 3,000 dollars. The total package was worth in the area of 12-13,000 dollars American. After her second year the school, for the duration of her eligibility, all education costs were to be covered."

The (paid) American intercollegiate athletic environment – one of free school, where classes are structured around training, and gaining entrance to classes is assured – is appealing to some who would like these perks but whose home country is structured differently from philosophical and operational viewpoints. In Canada the term student-athlete is appropriate, because the student always comes before the athlete. In America, the athlete appears to come before the student:

Despite the NCAA academic regulations for student progress (basically, 24 units passed during the previous twelve months and twelve units of study concurrent with participation), many of the courses athletes take do not lead to a useable degree. The courses athletes take may be chosen for them because the coach wants the athletes' minds free to concentrate on the sport...Rarely will a coach allow an athlete to neglect athletic commitment for academic commitments (Figler, 129).

The commitment to college sport in America is clear. In America, college sport is part of popular culture in a way it is not in Canada. The college versions of the major spectator sports (football, men's basketball) produce significant revenues and audiences, both live and through television. Major U.S. schools also raise significant revenues for sport from their alumni and booster associations, groups for whom sporting successes remain important. This substructure results in athletic fanaticism

and the creation of athletic heroes, which seems contrary to the purposes of institutions of higher learning:

While such organizations may raise much-needed money for the support of athletics, the external nature of booster groups inherently distances such groups from the central philosophic tendencies of the institution with which they are affiliated. While booster groups may direct all of their resources toward the acquisition of one institutional goal (dollars, star players, or coaches), boosters unassociated and unsupervised by central administrative leadership may, unwittingly or not, supplant the primary educational goals of the college or university with the secondary goal of resource acquisition (Chu 1989, 134).

In Canada, resources – including development and maintenance money - are much sparser. However, even if they were plentiful, my strong sense is that the goal of providing primarily educational opportunity would not change. This is not the case in the NCAA. In America, the preparation and creation of heroes, a Star System of sorts, begins well before university. The agendas of sport ultimately drive the collective behavior of universities; schools, relying on capital from athletic program revenues, have been proven to show academic leniency to top athletes in order that they continue to aid the campus sports economy (Sage 1979; Schaff 1995). The deplorable, comparatively inferior, graduation rates between the United States and Canada leads me to brand the American system ultimately unfortunate for those athletes who, for a variety of reasons, do not leave university to make a living in professional sport. In these cases former athletes cannot fall back upon academic skill and achievement in their quest for employment, which naturally lessens employment options. Fans and boosters, needing to demonstrate their loyalty, give money in support of athletic success because athletic success is important. It is less a system of education than place of business:

Certainly, Bear Bryant understood and admitted, and Don Canham understands and admits, that college sport is a business...Even Walter Byers, Executive Director of the NCAA, had recently admitted that college sport is not the ideal haven for the student-athlete – that is, not a haven where scrupulous administrators run their athletic programs as models of high educational standards. After estimating that 30% of major sports institutions are engaged in serious violations of NCAA standards, Byers publicly mused whether the entire big-sport amateur system should be scrapped in favor of an admittedly semi-professional system (Ibid., 193).

Canada does not have an intercollegiate sports economy – it is about intercollegiate sport survival more than intercollegiate stars, about providing experience, not making money. Many Canadian student-athletes in this study appeared amazed by the prospect of paid education. While scholarship proved to be a particular, desirable, oddity to the Canadians of this study, scholarships are vital to the NCAA and the business of intercollegiate sport.

The NCAA academic, marketing, and network television systems start with student-athletes. Without scholarships there would be fewer big games, fewer big gates, and less big money from television. If the business of intercollegiate sport were to limit itself to those who could afford to get in, the college sport system might well virtually shut down. The costs of education in the United States are considerably greater than the costs of education in Canada. From both experiential and fiscal perspectives, scholarship, at least, tempers student-athlete costs, while providing experiences not readily available (or possible) in Canada. However, the perception that scholarship covers all costs, in the case of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes, is wrong, at least initially.

The perception: an intercollegiate program offers "a scholarship" to a prospective student-athlete. The student accepts the offer and signs a Letter of

Intent. The student assumes education and living expenses will be covered. This situation is often not the case, or is exaggerated (Coakley, 296).

In this study, in many cases, exaggerations were commonplace. In many situations the cost of a scholarship-subsidized athletic-education in the United States meant greater costs (in Canadian dollars) for Canadian women's soccer student-athletes than paying full tuition, books, and living at a Canadian university. (This fact does not address the quality of that education.)

NCAA Division One programs, including women's soccer, do have money available to student-athletes, but similar to a marketplace, these programs have only a certain number of scholarships to give to a certain number of athletes. There is only so much money schools can legally offer. The logic: the best athletes in the highest profile sports – those programs which, in turn, generate the most money and profile back to the program and university – will obviously be offered the highest scholarship. Canadian women's soccer student-athletes, who may play for NCAA recruiters at high-level club and provincial games – games important enough to show athletic character - typically and financially remain relatively unknown or risky properties in which to invest. In addition, women's soccer is certainly not at the forefront of any American university's marketing plan. It follows, then, that Canadian women's soccer student-athletes are rarely at the top of the recruiting ladder and are offered scholarships commensurate with their place in the hierarchy, which is to say as little as possible, at least initially. Some Canadian athletes, however, "held out", not unlike many of their professional peers in other sports, for a better deal and got one. They realized college sport is basically a business, and negotiated a deal. The majority, in this study, though, seemed absolutely unaffected by the cost

of their education, trusting their parents would cover financial shortfalls, which they did in every case.

The sometimes-inflated costs of a "scholarship" education in the United States appeared to have no bearing on the thinking of the Canadian student-athletes in this study. Parental support was assured, assumed and delivered. The socio-economic background of each athlete in this study indicates middle to upper-middle class resources. The student-athletes I met in person provided every reason to confirm this notion. Each was tastefully and fashionably attired and addressed financial issues in cavalier fashion. These well-to-do Canadian parents entered into a cross-border economic exchange in the interest of their daughter's happiness and comfort and in keeping with her goals. In these cases scholarship was a secondary safety net to the primary support – both economic and physical - offered by parents:

It is often forgotten that young people in higher income families have more opportunities than young people from lower-income families to develop skills in a wide variety of sports. Grants in gymnastics, golf, ice hockey, soccer, swimming, tennis, volleyball, and a number of other sports go to those who have had opportunities to participate in those sports through childhood and adolescence. Resources are needed to take advantage of opportunities. Lower income people are less likely to have these resources (Coakley, 298).

The Canadian student-athletes could have stayed home and had their education paid for, but instead chose, with parental financial backing, to attend university in the United States in the interest of greater sport opportunities - which incurred greater financial costs. However, these costs were not the responsibility of the individual, and when measured against the opportunity of the NCAA experience, were worthwhile from the athletes' perspective. The fact remains, and this study supports the point, that often Canadian student-athletes are offered partial

scholarships, with the possibility for increased money or other such enticements as reward for establishing athletic or academic excellence. However, often these Canadian student-athletes pay considerably more in tuition and books for their first "scholarship" season in the United States than they would if they remained in Canada. Enjoying the financial benefits of scholarship does not in every case also mean enjoying the benefits of being debt-free. But it does if parental money wipes debts clean.

4.3 COACHING: COLLEGE AND YOUTH SPORT

The largest structural difference between being a true student-athlete or enjoying the entitlements of semi-professionalism surrounds the individual loss of an element of control that comes with being an employee (in sport, or any other field). By agreeing, in essence, to be paid, the athlete becomes not so much individual as property, as some of the athletes in this study attest. This changes the role of the coach, from motivator, tactician, and mentor, to employer, power broker, evaluator and disciplinarian. The NCAA coach controls much more than just playing time. This individual has, or often has created, a power base in which there is established control over an athlete, largely because their job is to produce. It can be a very impersonal endeavor. The higher profile the job, the higher the expectation is of sound recruiting and positive returns, victories:

It's not easy meeting the expectations of everyone from presidents to sportswriters and from principals to students. Coaches will often have to ignore the expectations of some people if they are to meet the expectations of others. When this happens, coaches must be tactful and diplomatic, or they will end up making enemies who can threaten their jobs and make their lives miserable (Coakley, 196).

Coaches in America have much greater real power to influence the athletic or personal life of a student-athlete. This comparatively greater power is due in large measure to cash transactions in the form of scholarship and in the pressures which come from the expectation to recruit the best athletes – when every other school operates by the same competitive principles – and to win. These pressures on coaches and administrators are transmitted in turn, to student-athletes, who are sometimes pushed beyond acceptable limits and treated as something less than human:

There is no question that physical and mental abuse must be halted. With the mirror held up, most coaches would agree. College coaches are now very well paid. Some are making ten times what they could have earned in 1980 when the coach's job was simpler and clearly defined. (Lapchick, 204).

In Canada, coaches have job security and are under less direct pressure to win, instantly and consistently. The majority of full-time Canadian university coaches, in my experience, are employed through faculties, meaning there exist teaching and potential research obligations, tasks in the academic realm, outside coaching. However, this situation is changing, with greater numbers of contract, coaching-only, positions awarded, with no academic or teaching obligations. Generally, regardless of contract, coaches in Canada are not hired to win, exclusively, though most coaches, like anywhere else, certainly want to. But they are not hired to be fired. There is not the same pressure and the same frenzy to recruit Canadian athletes to Canadian schools. Canadian coaches are hired to coach, to teach skill constructively, politely and respectfully. With different institutional expectations come downplayed pressures and, correspondingly, a down-graded pay scale. Most assistant coaches in the CIAU from across the myriad of programs work for a small honorarium. No

Canadian university coach is rich. Disagreement with a Canadian university coach could mean eventually not playing for the team. In the United States, similar dissension could also result in not playing for the team. This also means the potential loss of scholarship and perhaps a loss of educational opportunity. Thus, the consequences of dissent are much more far-reaching, because there is generally great power and pressure in coaching collegiate athletics in the United States than in Canada. In this study, in some cases, the coach seemed to take on the persona of ruler, placing the athlete in a clearly subservient position and often requiring greater behavioral and athletic accountability than just showing up for practice and performing on Saturdays. The institutional and community expectations for both coaches and athletes create greater challenges in the United States:

Coaches must deal with the pressure of being held totally accountable for results in unpredictable and highly visible events...Coaches often deal with this pressure and strain for gaining support for their methods, gaining control over their programs and the people connected with them...These tactics may cause coaches to appear traditional, authoritarian, manipulative, and power hungry, despite the fact these traits may not be parts of their own personalities (Coakley, 198).

The dynamic in Canada is much less intense. As a result, some Canadian student-athletes had to work through frustrations over the seemingly omnipresent role of the coach in their lives in the American environment. Some felt angry, disappointed, and frustrated - like a nobody. This is the negative side of the semi-professional paradigm:

"We were told what to eat on the road. We were not allowed to have pop. I wasn't a big pop drinker anyway, but we weren't allowed to have pop. We weren't allowed to have hamburgers or fries. We were told what we could have off the menu, how much, when to eat, how much you could have."

"I didn't trust coaches after I came back. I was trusting, but I figured out pretty quickly they don't give a shit about you as a person, they just give a shit about winning. It doesn't matter to them."

"After one month all these girls had no confidence left, because he would just yell at them, and you're always wondering what he is going to think everytime you touch the ball. He was always yelling and he was always giving us crap."

"He was probably the worst coach I have ever seen, in every way. You know how sometimes you have a coach that you don't like or he's not that great but you respect him, or he makes the players respect him. Well, this coach, he didn't make us respect him. I mean we had no respect for him as a person or as a coach."

The system of pressures and expectations to win seems to manifest itself in some situations, as questionable coaching behavior. This debate is not exclusive to intercollegiate sport. The pressures of competition and sporting success begins where sport begins, in youth sport. Similar to intercollegiate sport, youth sport seems to have deviated from leisure and recreation into career preparation (the astronomical state of professional sport contracts have no doubt fuelled this deviation, from the perspective of both parent and child). At the point athletes become student-athletes on either side of the border they are likely to be well acquainted with the expectations which come with participation in youth sport and the corresponding pressure that can result when entire careers hang in the balance. The sport development system in North America, from grassroots to the big-time, seems to be about professionalization and pressurized glory, with not everyone achieving the glory. "The expectations of both student athletes and their parents are becoming more and more distorted, recognizing only the "biggest" and the "best."" (McQuilken, 5). This sentiment starts in minor sports, where coaches and sport programs seem to drive kids towards competitive ends, which may not be feasible, factoring individual skill and motivation. Kids get pushed in both countries, but the aspiring sport stars of America get a bigger dose due to the comparative place of

sport in popular culture, the money available for minor sport programs through boosters, and, ultimately, the importance of winning:

The atmosphere created by youth sports structures and achievement-demanding settings is no longer one of play for many youngsters, but has become a form of work, complete with evaluations by significant others, and rewards and punishments. Youngsters do not need adults to create a tangible model of professional sports for youth, because youngsters can do this in their own mind without the attendant pressures of social evaluation (Figler, 94).

This professionalism and social evaluation within youth sport counteracts the more elusive personal lessons that can be learned through sport experience - namely skill development, discipline, selflessness, teamwork, sacrifice, and camaraderie. The win-at-all-cost attitude, rife in contemporary youth sport, can too often supplant these lessons. Dr. Darrell J. Burnett is a clinical and sport psychologist in the United States:

I saw a ten-year-old boy in my office, referred by his father, who wanted me to "motivate" him. The boy broke into tears, relating how he used to love baseball but had grown sick of it because his dad had made him take 200 swings a day at the batting tee in his backyard, seven days a week. He said he wanted to spend time with his buddies, but his dad had told him this was the only way he was getting to the big leagues." (Burnett from <http://www.tutornuway.com>).

The push is on in youth sports to make kids stars before they are athletes, or want to be. At points it appears the adults organizing, planning and influencing future athletes are not as mature as those they are directing:

Sometimes youth sports gets a bad rap because of the uninformed perception of coaches, parents and players that winning must supersede all else. As I travel from field to field watching youth sports in action I hear coaches yelling at players, parents yelling at the coaches and players. In some cases the environment gets...hostile. What are we trying to do here? Is this the kind of recreation environment

we want for our children?" (Harrington from <http://www.america.net>)

This competitive individualism is a problem, without borders. However, since pressures on coaches and pressures and expectations on athletes seem greater in American sport at many levels, it is no surprise that the pressures in U.S. colleges can be extreme, based upon immature coaching pressures which begin in some situations on the immature within youth sport.

4.4 "ACADEMICS ISN'T VERY GOOD HERE"

Some of the Canadian women's soccer student-athletes, while at university in America, seem to be at a school of lower, not higher, learning. The NCAA does not seem to attach the same importance to academic performance; its reason for being seems to be the organization of high profile, money-making, athletic competitions.

This rather ironic fact is not lost on athletes:

"I don't know how to be nice about this, but school here is for like super rich parents who have, like, stupid kids. Like it seems like people will pay for their kids to come to this school so they can say they went to university, and to get a degree, because academics isn't very good here."

"The workload is considerably less. The amount of time I have to put into my courses is a lot less. Testing is main source of grading here, rather than term papers and things like that. I'm used to writing papers, and I do not have to write any papers."

"It's not like I worked exceptionally hard. Like, I did some homework and whatnot, but it kind of concerns me. They base most of their things on attendance rather than like learning the stuff. If you are there and sign your name – they take attendance in most classes – you'll do fine. It's kind of like junior high. It's not responsibility. I probably want to come back to Canada and take like a Master's degree or whatever, and I don't know if I'll be up-to-par with the Canadians, because down there it is a totally different curriculum. The teaching there is just different. It's based on attendance, not memorizing and like drilling stuff into your head. And that's what I was used to in Canada. It does concern me to come back to Canada. I don't know if I'll be ready."

Academic proficiency through individual responsibility is the standard expectation within the Canadian university system. In America the regimented schedules of practice, travel, and competition make going to school, in some situations, a secondary concern. Unlike Canada, where educational goals are foundational in addition to also being secondary and tertiary, and intercollegiate sports are thought to be extra-curricular, the NCAA scholarship system suggests sport (ones "job") is central and ones' situation, leaving school as an extra, an add-on to place and situation. Some of the athletes in this study expressed concern over the academic reputation of their American school and its potential acceptance as academically credible in Canada. These concerns appear to be grounded:

To speak of "academic policy" in the United States is misleading because we have no central ministry of higher education. At both the state and federal levels, higher education has been a remarkably decentralized arrangement characterized by institutional autonomy, voluntary association, and relatively little governmental regulation (Thelin, 10).

The regulation of athletes in scholarship situations often involves the reiteration of priority one: school is sport. The collegiate sports programs of the United States are not mandated to shape their athletes into competent students beyond the minimum requirements necessary to maintain athletic eligibility.

Corporate sponsors are not too concerned with educational issues. Too much money is involved to consider education. This problem is intensified by the fact that many decisions affecting intercollegiate sports are made by people having nothing to do with higher education. Instead, they are experts in marketing, accounting, business management, and the media. I call this "corporatization", and I see it as a major problem in intercollegiate sports (Coakley, 414.)

It seems the majority of Canadian student-athletes in this study recognized the state of education in the United States as inferior, but countered with the suggestion

their competitive and sporting environments were far superior. They did not, generally, decide to leave Canada in order to receive an education; they left for soccer and to receive a scholarship:

"I wanted an education, and that's why I came home, because the education part wasn't happening. If I could do it again, I would have gone for a year, taken an undecided major, and just enjoyed the experience. I would have written a year off of my education, not worried about it... enjoyed playing the high-level of competition, seeing places, incredible places every weekend.

Of secondary interest is the cost of a possible secondary education.

University tuition in the United States for non-athletic students is much higher than in Canada (due, in part, to less governmental subsidization of post-secondary education). Even with a scholarship to subsidize these costs, the costs of education are greater, and the benefits of that education, except for a select few, seem less.

These facts did not seem to faze the athletes of this sample. Many had parents willing to cover financial shortfalls, without seemingly much regard for what that money was actually paying for. Meanwhile, the athletes may have viewed academics – perhaps like the schools which housed them – as necessary but certainly not vital. The money given to athletes, and the dynamic resulting from cash changing hands, in addition to a perceived lack of educational credibility and accountability, are three factors which certainly could make the NCAA experience a unique exercise for any young Canadian athlete.

4.5 CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The culture and society of the United States affected the young Canadians of this sample intimately and deeply. Many of the Canadian student-athletes in this study came from traditional middle-to-upper-middle-class families. Among the values taught in these homes and to these kids were kindness, politeness, respect and

manners. After growing up in such an environment, one can imagine the dissonance felt when experiencing a ghetto for the first time, of being in a racially charged country where segregation and bigotry have not yet died. Of living in a country where gun ownership is a right, and gun control means more guns; where violence is pervasive across the urban landscape, and not just on TV. Some athletes experienced the in-your-face tension that appears to be unique to America:

"The people are really nice. But their accents and ritual are different. Tension. The whole racial thing. You hear stories. The white people just seem way more racist."

"There was a lot of racism there, and that bothered me a lot. We were told by people not to talk to the black people. I had never experienced anything like that before. It really bothered me."

"Canada is cleaner. Better morals. It's pretty stereotypical but it's more racist in the States. There are too many conflicts."

"It's a lot different. I mostly notice the racism kind of thing. It's not so much racism but it certainly is segregated. I don't know, it's like hostility between races. I talk to people the way they talk to me. You go into a classroom and the black people are sitting on one side and the white people are sitting on the other kind of thing. It's just kind of – no one speaks about it, but it just kind of happens. I try to keep an open mind. One of my friends' back home is black and I don't even think about it, but here it is such a big issue. It's like you can't be friends with everyone. People look at you funny when you are."

While many Canadian student-athletes spoke positively of the athletic environment of the United States, there were, and continue to be, other environments that seem unsafe and appear incongruous with Canadian values. This is not to suggest racism and bigotry and tension are not part of the Canadian cultural landscape. However, it appears in Canada, racial tension, like disputes with native groups over land claims, are more subdued, less on-the-surface and less obvious everyday than in the United States. Racism appears to be ubiquitous in America, not least in the realm of sport:

It is easy for white athletes, no matter their racial attitudes, to accept blacks on their teams for two reasons. First, they

need not have any social contact with black teammates. Sports that blacks dominate are not sports like golf, tennis, and swimming, (*and soccer, my addition*) where socializing is almost a requirement for competition. Players need not mingle after basketball, baseball or football. More important, black male players need not mingle with white women after those games. Housing on campus, and social discrimination through fraternities and sororities, further isolates black athletes. Whether in high school or college, the black student-athlete faces special problems as an athlete, a student, and a member of the campus community (Lapchick, 8).

Racism appears to be lived and practiced in the United States to greater degrees than in Canada. The student-athletes of this study were, in many cases, their own "race" at their universities, but being Canadian was dealt with humorously and with measures of wonder (*how cold is IT, really?*, one girl was asked). Blacks and other minorities were treated with perceived contempt for many within this sample, which was an uncomfortable situation. Some Canadian student-athletes in this study were forced to deal with society as society is, different from their own, with no power to change an obvious human behavioral oversight.

4.6 "THE UNITED STATES SEEMS BIGGER" - ON TV

Entertainment is one of America's largest and most profitable industries. Sport is one of America's priorities. On any given weekend afternoon from September to March these ideas converge to show entertaining college sport to the masses. These transmissions are carefully sculpted, with its images and impression widely transmitted, not only around America, but in Canada and, increasingly, globally. Specifically, the availability of American college sport on Canadian television does not bolster the reputation of Canadian university sport - it hurts it. Compare a college football game on ABC to the Canadian university championship on TSN. The

American college game looks like any of the other sold-out events shown to sports watchers from across the continent. By Canadian standards, it looks surreal.

Canada's game is typically played before 17-27,000 fans in a 60,000-seat stadium in the centre of a "world class" city that has no time for football, er, Canadian football, at any level. This national Canadian showcase is played with the same passion as its American cousins play their game. Athletes, whether they are students or not, do, for the most part, play their games well when it counts – but entire sections of empty blue seats probably do more perceptual harm than good. The reality, simply, is that the CIAU is not at this point a viable sports product, it is a university sport offering. The NCAA is clearly a sports product, and Canadians are buying:

This is a concern that transcends national boundaries as Canadians are in danger of becoming an American cultural colony...millions of Canadians prefer to watch Americans play American sports...we have been influenced by the media to accept the belief that American sports are more sophisticated, skillful, and entertaining products than our own. Ultimately our Canadian identity could be undermined if our sports heroes come from another country (Hall et. al., 143).

Or, Canadian identity could potentially be undermined if our sports heroes went to another country. Following are the thoughts of Canadian women's soccer student-athletes on the influence of television in shaping their views of American culture and American college sport:

- I'm so into sport. Whenever I watch TV I usually watch sports. All I see is American this and American that. Canadian sport usually takes a second seat to American sports. We don't have the coverage because I don't think we think we deserve it."
- "I always thought the United States was bigger and better than Canada. You always saw everything on TV, which made the United States seem bigger."
- "When you turn on the TV all you see are the American sports teams playing. It's all you see and it's made out to be the big American dream...I watched game

shows, I didn't watch sports that much. That was my big hint that the States was the big glamour country that makes everything look ten times better."

- "I'd have to say media in the form of television had the biggest impact on me, just seeing a lot of players I played with or against, seeing how far they have come, what they have achieved. We really never had an opportunity to have that exposure (in Canada)."
- "Compared to Canada I think the media makes a big difference. All the little girls knew all about all of the good players around (when playing American college soccer). They have people to look up to and I don't think we had that in Canada."
- "It's kind of like a great product they are selling on TV. The media makes it appear that the US is the place to go and play, and I think that's what keeps a lot of players interested in the United States. I'm a prime example. I went down on a soccer scholarship, went through as an education teacher, never had thoughts of wanting to coach, but it just worked out that way."

A sub-factor is the presence of the micro-media, the institution's media, which is also powerful in presenting a dominant comparative culture, and sympathetic view of

America:

- "They have a recruitment tape, which quickly went through the university and shows what it offers, then focussed on soccer, and shows highlights from the games and the fans and things like that."
- "Everything is more of a big deal here. Everybody is more recognised. What you get on the news in Canada is usually all of the bad stuff that happens in the big cities. I don't see much crime and dirtiness. It's a bad perception I'd say. It's different here, but not as bad as I thought it would be."
- "I view the media in college as a necessary evil - without the media there are no crowds, and maybe we wouldn't have jobs if they weren't there."
- "The US is big on marketing and the show side of it. It takes away from the fun of the game, but I think it makes them better."
- "The media's focus is often totally focused upon the United States...I think it's because they believe they are the only one that matters. I do give them credit because their pride for their country is phenomenal. Sometimes it gets carried away, but in that sense they are very proud. But the media always makes it out to be like they are the absolute best."

The American perspective of transferring a sense of culture, of place, of highlighting the strengths of place, giving a sense of the way things should be, with a pretence of marketing and dominance, was common among Canadian athletes' perceptions. However, while these women's soccer athletes all thought American college sport television projected/s itself very well through their television set, leading to false expectations in some instances. They confirmed a connection between these media effects and their decision to leave Canada, but not directly. Television was neither blamed for, nor credited with, playing a major role in their decision. However, the NCAA's use of television directly affects its perception, as Schwartz (1981) states:

Since the attitudes and beliefs that people bring to an electronic communication determine what they take away from it, the skilful electronic communicator should be aware of what is inside the minds of the people he (sic) wants to reach so what he (sic) can find a link between his material and those who receive it. Research aimed at uncovering this will tell how to evoke a response most effectively... (22).

Network providers obviously understand this notion, supplying the image to elicit a response. From different regions of the country and through different-sized sets the Canadian athletes seem to concur.

- "I am motivated just knowing there is more of an audience watching than meets the eye. I think it's really cool when you make the paper or get an interview on TV. It drives me to play a little harder, I think."
- "I hate to say it but the media's presence was a factor for me. It was definitely a factor. I guess it got me going the same way a big crowd would - get your adrenaline going."
- "I think everybody plays harder. It gives you another incentive to play well."
- "I tend to play harder, but not because it's like 'oh my god I'm on TV.' It's more a pump you up kind of thing. It makes me focus more. In Canada it's like you're here, you're playing, but nobody really pays attention. Here you have to be focussed - you're kind of forced to be."

The claim that media effects research is highly contentious and firm conclusions are somewhat elusive. It is false to suggest A causes B, or that watching television, in this situation, makes kids go to school in the United States. However, there is something to be said about the effects of exposure to the athletic environment of America through television. Television, and the presence of television, are enticements:

The undeniably high profile of the mass media in contemporary cultural practices, set against the evidence that people bring other cultural resources to their dealings with it, suggests that we can view the relationship between media and culture as a subtle interplay of mediations. Thus, we may think of the media as the dominant representational aspect of modern culture (Tomlinson, 61).

American sport and American sport-media are both environmentally and culturally unique when compared with their Canadian equivalents. The fact athletes enjoy entitlement and reverence in the United States, and enjoy the sanctioning of these concepts through media and television, the Canadian system appears minuscule by comparison. It is important to note appearances do not always align with substance.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

This qualitative research study was beneficial for several reasons, not least as another example of the influence American culture exerts on at least some Canadians and their perceptions. The Canadian women's soccer student-athletes of this study were universal in their desire for greater short-term recognition by choosing to study and play soccer in the United States. It is the long-term life and employability options available (or not) of this decision which concern me. However, the financing provided through scholarship appears to be one form of recognition, which also includes shorter lines to purchase academic materials, to the restructuring of their academic environment to support athletic pursuits. The well spoken, supportive and cooperative Canadian women's soccer student-athletes who comprised this study enjoyed the "perks" which come with varsity athlete status in America, and were not afraid to elaborate on their resultant feelings of importance and contentment in many situations. However, equal in intensity, were tales of resentment, of unexpected situations and unplanned frustrations, particularly in the area of coaching. However, the fact remains that for those athletes still playing and for those who graduated from the NCAA, their expectations are or were being met. Those who left did so for reasons of misunderstanding, miscommunication, lack of fulfillment, or simply needing to flee. However, the perception that American college is a "big-time" environment outweighs a negative tale or two, as the NCAA well knows. The opportunities available in the United States from sporting perspectives are beyond compare, anywhere, Canada included. The athletes of this study accepted that opportunity, and in some cases sought it to fulfill a life goal. What

they failed to see, even in the case of an athlete who played in the United States after graduating from a Canadian university, is the opportunity they left behind.

As an employee of a large, by Canadian standards, athletic department, I know, from the professional, academic and utilitarian perspectives, the frustrations of Canadian university sport. As an individual who believes amateur athletes, and particularly student-athletes, are worthy of respect, I know of their frustrations with Canadian university sport. Many of the student-athletes within this study substantiated some of my frustrations, but they also seemed to miss a glimpse of the larger picture. The Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union is not in the business of selling a product, it is about providing experience to student-athletes, about the acquisition of individual academic skills and the widening of life options.

Universities in the United States use NCAA sport as a way of making money (in some sports), as a way of attracting alumni donations, and in a way that increases the profile of the university in American popular culture. The larger university has a vested interest in the reputational success of its athletic program. Canadian schools also desire to be competitive and well rounded in both academic and athletic arenas, though it seems societal pressure toward athletics is less obvious. Beyond its reputation, the NCAA is also in some sports the primary development system for professional athletics. In football, basketball and to an increasing degree hockey, the NCAA serves as training ground for aspirants to the pro level. Because of the economic impact of college sport – driven by boosters, television networks and often dedicated fans - showcasing the next generation of professional sport stars seems more important than ensuring that a prospective “star” could write a 1,000-word coherent essay, know the Periodic Table of

Elements, or discuss the G7. In America, particularly in the big-time sports, but also in less regarded sports such as women's soccer, it seems academics takes a seat on the bench while self-promotion through sports entertainment whips crowds into frenzies, and sends boosters and corporate America to their checkbooks. The NCAA, despite maintaining formal rules on study halls, tutorial time for athletes, and despite boosting the profile of its academic success stories, is not about school to the same degree it is in Canada. It's about sport, in a semi-professional setting, and it is about making money, which makes for a dubious mix considering American college sport is still called amateur. There are continuous violations in NCAA athletics:

College sports command a great deal of enthusiasm and attention from fans. Increasingly, however not all of the excitement and interest comes from competition on the playing field. Payments and other inducements to college athletes, agent-player relationships, alumni intervention, performance enhancing drugs, and questions of racial bias have most recently been in the spotlight on intercollegiate athletics...The question of whether or not college sport is a business is no longer relevant; the question is only one of the order of magnitude (Fleischer, Goff and Tollison, 4).

Discussions of the utility of the NCAA continue, as former NCAA director Walter Byers writes in a book dedicated "to the free competitive spirit of this nation's young men and women":

This system is so biased against human nature and simple fairness in light of today's high-dollar, commercialized college marketplace that the ever increasing number of primary and secondary NCAA infractions cases of the 1990s emerge in the current environment as mostly an indictment of the system itself (2).

The system seems anything but amateur. In philosophical terms, amateur sport is unpaid sport, played for enjoyment and watched for fun. The NCAA – though reputed to be an amateur sport league – is not. It is a semi-professional

arrangement designed under strict regulations to provide for the needs of the athlete – nothing more – while those athletes are expected to generate sums of money through their play which primarily benefit their athletic program. In the end, this system also benefits those who go on to lucrative (!) professional careers, but this group, while given great attention, is still small, and the minority. The system is highly contentious. This is illustrated annually by those athletes who, having established reputations in their rookie or sophomore seasons, opt into a professional draft as an underclassman, which is an ironic title since the NCAA student-athlete seems underclassed while in university. The NCAA has effectively established a one-way, profitable, and understood cartel:

The NCAA cartel exists for the benefit of its members, particularly its larger and more influential Division 1-A members who pocket the lion-share of its \$118 million contract with ABC for televising regular season football games during the 1978-1981 seasons. NCAA members want equality of on-field competition because they know that competitive games and conferences produce the greatest public interest and the most monetary return (Figler, 145).

I suppose cheating is ok when everybody *has* to do it. In big-ticket sports aspiring athletes have nowhere else to show their wares than at a university and within the NCAA. This arrangement guarantees the NCAA the best athletes, who, in turn, provide athletes not with financial means, because those are saved for the school, but for the opportunity to showcase athletic skill in hopes of gaining attention to make the pros. Once again, in college sport in America, academics is the small print. Schools of the NCAA typically grant privileges and entitlements to varsity athletes, in addition to money, all items that are outside of Canadian possibility. In Canada student-athletes are not marketing tools and they are not stars: they are

students, they are people who will one day need a job, and its mandate is designed to create environments where greater job and life options are possible through personal discipline.

Sport in Canadian universities is extra-curricular, subsidiary in every respect (including funding) to the main purposes of universities. The training system for pro sport does not co-exist with the objectives of universities. Universities in Canada are places for the development and training of skill in academic disciplines. In order to achieve high levels of skill development in other, often non-academic disciplines, including music and acting, one would have to go outside the university setting. The position of sport is in many ways analogous, in others quite different.

The universities of Canada are not athletic schools, they are schools, with a premium placed upon learning and succeeding academically, then in life, above all else. Canadian university athletic departments learn to operate within these constraints, which is frustrating until one contemplates a larger picture, one where one-time students with athletic skill were given opportunities to acquire other skills – in business, in communications, in discipline. Nonetheless, this research on women's soccer student-athletes illustrates that to operate within these constraints can lead to feelings of lost opportunity, and recognition denied, for those involved. Many expressed feelings of entitlement, derived in most (though not all) cases because these athletes knew other athletes in the American system, and heard their stories. These methods are simply not consistent with the agenda of post-secondary academic institutions in Canada. This is a significant reason why the athletes of this study decided to pursue a sporting education in the United States: because there they would be recognized without having to work outside their natural skills or

routine. They would be pushed in areas they desired to be pushed in, like sport, and left to their own devices in areas less motivating, like studying. Some athletes see and hear stories of the entitlement and reverence directed towards collegiate athletes in the United States and, based on many of the stories told to me, desire the same treatment. Canadian student-athletes do not always care about academics, but in Canada the purposes of universities remain primarily steeped in the unbending tradition of higher learning.

American college sport influences on Canadian athletes are established and increasing. It seems elite Canadian athletes with aspirations of college sport are contacted or seek out American recruiters, who are often only too willing to take a chance on an unproven athlete under the noble shroud of the "scholarship" offer, which in many cases costs the student or parents more in Canadian funds than they would pay in Canada for a similar experience. But "truth" in some American situations appears to be clouded, veiled by fancy brochures, golden handshakes and false promises, creating different and stressful situations for naïve, impressionable young adults. College sport in American appears to be about winning and the closing of deals in order to win. Impressionable young adults can be no match for a slick recruiter, as some athletes of this study have identified. Perceptions of the dominance of the United States seem to become "standards" in many spheres, not least in the area of college athletics. In American college athletics, the potential to be a star and take part in real sport entertainment has an appeal that the small crowds and cash-starved programs of Canadian universities sport cannot directly combat, or debate. This American college perception burrowed into the souls of the Canadian athletes of this study.

It would be interesting to follow this study with an elongated study over the course of an athletes' entire career - the experiences offered and choices made through the end of a playing career and then detailing of life choices, both available and enacted. In this study those who comprised the first-year and returning athletes would be interesting to speak with in detail in, as an example, seven years. Did they graduate? Did they return to Canada? Did they attend university in Canada? What do they do now? Are they content with the decision they made?

I think of these questions because through this research endeavor I changed in attitude. I have spent much of my life either trying to be an athlete or otherwise around them in administrative or media situations. I have witnessed first-hand the differences between the Canadian and American intercollegiate systems. I thought, prior to beginning this research, that losing Canadian talent to the United States was emotionally and patriotically, troubling. I thought by checking this perception and framing it in an academic setting, perhaps my work could help create athletic scholarships within Canadian universities. I think differently today.

I think now about what makes university athletes of Canada the best pure athletes, in my opinion, in the world. They are required to maintain sound academic progress. Many, though, excel, doing so while facing early morning classes, late practices, part-time employment, and summer school, (often if they are the low end of the range). This is largely undertaken for intrinsic reasons, whatever they may be. There are few entitlements to university athlete status in Canada, but the character this status creates is often, afterwards, employable, if nothing else. Can American college sport claim the same proportional success?

Canadian university sport is not American college sport. The differences start in name and are exemplified through experience. The NCAA experience of Canadian women's soccer athletes, and all athletes who venture south, is different than the experience they would receive if they stayed in Canada. But the principal difference is in the area of academics, where in Canada individual discipline and responsibility are the sole means to ensure eligibility, along with athletic skill. Educational skills tend to out-last athletic skills over the course of a life.

At the end of the day, and at the end of this thesis, I contend Canada is the place to play, if long-term employment goals outside of sport are a factor. Canada has a vision while America has a business. At this point, though, shortsightedness is one factor that suggests there is still plenty of buyers.

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APPENDIX:

Informed Consent Form Canadian Athlete Perceptions On Recruitment and Participation in the NCAA

Principal Investigator:

Dan Carle

Advisor:

Dr. David Whitson

This study aims to provide perspective on the motivations and expectations of Canadian women's soccer athletes who choose to accept a full or partial scholarship offer to attend university and play college soccer in the United States. The aim is to offer a clearer picture of why these young women athletes felt they could better fulfill their aspirations in the United States, and the extent to which their expectations are fulfilled in practice.

The study, based upon qualitative research via interview, will be conducted over one intervarsity season and one full academic year. It seeks to understand the athletic and academic experience of Canadian scholarship athletes, charting their adaptation to new and foreign situations, surroundings and cultures.

Confidentiality of the subjects, their institutions, and their coaching staff is assured. The final dissertation will contain altered names of the athlete and any name they might mention over the course of research, the campus location, the conference of play, and the institution and its staff.

The individual athletes will have complete and free access to their interview material, including transcripts and researcher impressions, and will be presented with all material for approval prior to the writing of the final draft. The final draft will contain only approved material.

There are eight requirements of respondents:

1. A pre-interview prior to leaving for the United States.
Time: one hour.
2. A second interview during the Christmas break.
Time: one hour
3. A third interview at the conclusion of the academic year, in May, 1997.
Time: one hour.
4. Three phone interviews of their experiences, especially during the intervarsity season, but continuing through the end of the academic year. These interviews will occur in the months of September, October, November, February, March.
Time: one-half hour each.

APPENDIX:

**Informed Consent Form
Canadian Athlete Perceptions On Recruitment and Participation in the NCAA .../2.**

TOTAL INTERVIEW TIME: 5.5 hours.

The respondents are free to question or seek clarification at any time during the study, which will take place from August, 1996 to April, 1997.

Upon completion of this study, all tapes and transcripts shall be preserved in a locked file by the researcher for a period of one calendar year, and which time the individual athletes will be given the option of keeping their tapes and transcripts. Should the individual athlete decline, the transcripts will be shredded and the tapes crushed.

THE SUBJECT MAY ALSO DECLINE PARTICIPATION OR WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EXPERIMENT AT ANY TIME FOR ANY REASONS, WITHOUT QUESTION OR CONSEQUENCE. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED PRIOR TO THE DECISION TO DISCONTINUE WILL BE TURNED OVER TO THE SUBJECT.

I have read this Informed Consent and confirm my participation in this study.

I understand I will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

Signed

Date

Witness

Investigator