THE ULTIMATE STUDENT ATHLETE

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Seminar: Sport and Society

Assignment: Describe the most unforgettable sports character you have known personally. Your reaction can be either negative or positive and must be based on first-hand experiences.

(1) It is Friday night, and my friends and I have decided to attend a girls' basketball game. (This particular game carries forward the great rivalry between Case High School and Horlick High School.) We head over to Case High School, and as we walk into the crowded gymnasium, we notice that the game has already started. I sit down in the bleachers and stare in amazement at the scoreboard because, in only two minutes, Horlick is clearly in control, leading 14-3. I wonder how this could have happened.

(2) As I shift my eyes back to the game, one of the player's from the Horlick's team suddenly catches my eye. She is a lean black girl with long hair and she is about five feet, seven inches tall. With the exception of her well-developed calf muscles, she does not look very strong, but she is running across the court with very little effort. Everything she is doing--dribbling, passing, shooting and rebounding--is just outstanding. I continue to watch her during the entire game, and, before I know it, it is all over. Horlick defeats Case by a score of 97-53, and that girl alone scores 35 points.

(3) On my way home, I realize how impressed I am with that girl's talent. I assume that she is an upperclassman, because she hardly made any mistakes, and any that she did make went unnoticed. All in all, I think she is an exceptional basketball player and I want to find out who she is.

(4) I was in eighth grade when I attended that game. Since that time, I have not only found out her identity, I have even become friends with her. Her name is Sonja Henning, and when I first saw her, she was only a freshman. I watched her talents develop during the next four years and I became even more impressed with her remarkable abilities. I think she is the best example of an all-around, outstanding student athlete I have ever known--and it's easy enough to see why.

(5) First, Sonja's sheer athletic ability is extraordinary. In high school, she earned twelve varsity letters--four in basketball and track, and two in tennis and volleyball. In each of those sports, she made the all-conference and all-county teams every year, receiving player of the year honors in basketball and track. With the help of Sonja's ability, her basketball team earned two consecutive trips to the state tournament, including a second place finish, and her track team earned four
consecutive trips, including two state titles. However, Sonja's accomplishments were not limited just to the local level. She also received recognition at the state and national levels, including being named Wisconsin's Miss Basketball, earning first team honors on Parade magazine's High School All-American Team, and also earning a spot on the North Basketball Team for the 1987 United States Olympic Festival. As one can see, Sonja is truly a very talented athlete.

(6) Second, Sonja is not only an outstanding athlete, she is also an excellent student. In high school, she took demanding advanced placement and honors courses all four years. And she didn't merely take demanding courses, she excelled at them. She maintained over a 4.0 grade point average each semester, and at the end of her four years in high school, she had a cumulative grade point average of 4.40. Both in the classroom and in sports, Sonja displayed exceptional ability and desire to achieve.

(7) Going to college was a part of Sonja's plans, although selecting one was no easy task. Because of her athletic and academic skills, she was overwhelmed with literally hundreds of letters and telephone calls from schools across the United States. Over forty Division I universities seriously recruited Sonja for their basketball programs, and after many months of decision making, she narrowed her choices to five: Wisconsin, Notre Dame, Stanford, Tennessee, and Texas. Sonja received a full scholarship when she finally chose to attend Stanford University.

(8) Ever since Sonja made that decision, she has proven to be worthy of that scholarship. Last year, during her freshman year, she maintained a high grade point average, while starting as point guard and averaging ten points per game. By doing so, she became an All-American selection and was named the NCAA's freshman (female) player of the year. So far, Sonja has continued to display her athletic and academic prowess at the college level. Even though she still has three more years of college, I am certain that Sonja will be quite a success story—not that she is not already—when she is finished. All in all, one thing is for sure: for as long as I live, I will never forget Sonja Henning.