

UAAP: Interview Responses

HILARY MURILLO [CHESS]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

I realized that I wanted to participate in the UAAP during my tryouts. I thought that I'd be satisfied with just getting a scholarship, which was my original goal. Still, when my coach put me up against that season's team members and told me that if I could beat them, I'd get into Team A (the UAAP playing team), my competitive instincts kicked in, and I wanted to win. I'm also the type of person that doesn't like to do things half-heartedly, so giving my best was the only option I could really give myself.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

Before the season began, I practiced whenever I could to prepare for the competition. I solved several chess puzzles to try to keep my brain sharp. I also tried to find out how my opponents play and find ways to counter those plays. Aside from the preparation specific to chess, I went to bed earlier the night before my game to make sure I didn't fall asleep mid-play and ate a heavy meal to give myself enough energy to play.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

While playing in the UAAP, I was reminded of the importance of prayer. Playing in the UAAP is not an easy thing to achieve, much less winning. Coupled with the heavy academic workload, adjustment period from high school to college, and other personal commitments, I thought I couldn't balance all of that during the UAAP season. But through prayer, I believe God helped me manage my time well.

Apart from prayer and time management, I was also taught the importance of humility and relying on my teammates rather than just myself. Although I played some games, I spent most of the season as a "bench player." My coach decided that I wasn't in my optimal condition and let my other teammates play instead. It was a decision that was made so that we as a team would benefit. Even if I wished I could have played more, I believe my coach made the right decision,

and I learned to trust in my teammates rather than asserting myself, even knowing that I wasn't in my best condition. With that, we managed to be in the Top 3 of the Women's Chess division of UAAP Season 82.

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?

1. The most important reminder is to pray and trust God always. Ask for wisdom from Him to know what to do, how to manage your time correctly, and play well. He is the one that gives us strength to get through everything, and in my experience, without Him, I would have failed a long time ago.

2. It's not easy to manage academics and training, especially if your chosen course is more challenging and requires a lot of your time. Deciding to become a collegiate-level varsity athlete means a certain level of responsibility to both yourself and your team. Meaning, you have to give your best to fulfill your duties in the team without disappointing yourself in the other aspects of your life. You have to be mentally prepared to sacrifice doing other things you may enjoy just to play well without sacrificing your academic standing.

3. Remember your original goal. If you plan to pursue a career unrelated to your sport, then make that your priority. The sport would be secondary but still a priority over other things you might want to do.

4. Take one day at a time and be joyful with every small victory. If you managed to win a game or complete a task you need to do, celebrate it internally. What may seem like small, insignificant achievements can eventually become great victories.

5. Rest when needed. Our brains and bodies need rest. If you're too tired to continue training or balancing your academics, it's best to rest for a while, recharge, and get back to the task when you feel better.

6. Enjoy the sport. Don't work too much to the point where you lose your love for your sport.

SHARIZ NGO [CHESS]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

My UAAP dream started around Grade 7. Before then, I did not really have concrete plans for college chess. It was only at that time when I first heard about the UAAP since the tournament became really popular because of the DLSU and UST basketball teams. As soon as I heard that there were these big tournaments in which really strong teams competed in, I knew that I wanted to join or at least try out for a team.

I've been playing chess since Grade 3 and as early as then I knew that I just wanted to keep on playing for as long as I could. It was a sport that I really fell in love with, so I would often map out my career in my head to make sure that I would still be able to compete during the different stages of my life. I originally planned to try out for the UAAP so that I could still play chess in college, but when I heard that they began to open divisions for senior high school players, I said, "Why not?" There was an amazing opportunity that I didn't want to miss.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

Before the season began, I had to intentionally dedicate time in my schedule for chess. Although there were several organizations that I wanted to join in, I had to limit my extra-curricular activities to make sure that I had time for training. As a student, there were times when it really couldn't be helped that I had to miss a session or two, but I wanted to limit these as much as possible. During training, we would often analyze openings, answer puzzles, and conduct practice games which helped in keeping chess in our system. It prevented us from becoming rusty.

However, the preparations did not stop there. When the season began, we had to continue this routine with a little more additional ones. Since our games were on the weekends, we used our weekdays to train and study our opponents. It was also during this time that I had to prepare my academic requirements in advance so that I did not have any distractions during the games. I did not want to be worrying about a Math homework while I played.

Aside from preparing myself mentally, I also had to prepare myself physically. Contrary to popular belief, chess does involve a physical aspect. I've only played in tournaments with short time controls, so competing in the UAAP was a completely new experience that I had to condition my body for. I tried to allot time in my week to exercise, namely walking and running long distances. Staring at the same board and same opponent for 1-3 hours in the afternoon was quite difficult and I admit that there were times when sleep became very tempting, especially in a quiet air-conditioned room. Since the round starts at 1:30 PM and it could end as late as 4:30 PM, I had to make sure that I was well-rested the night before and that my body was physically capable of enduring long strenuous thinking. On the game day itself, I also had to prepare light snacks which included candies, orange juice, and water in order to keep myself alert during the long round.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

My UAAP journey has indeed taught me a lot of things both on the board and off the board. However, I believe that the biggest lessons I learned were the importance of perseverance and commitment.

Since Ateneo consists mostly of male students, there were only a few female students in the community. This meant even fewer female chess players. When I joined, we were less than 4 players, the required number to form a UAAP team. If I wanted to play in the season, I had to really put in the effort of finding my own teammates. It was difficult because I had to become "*makapal na mukha*" and sadly I would often get rejected. It was hard to find people who would be able to dedicate time for training and competing because a lot of people already had org[anization]s while others just saw chess as a hobby. I had to try and try again until we were finally able to form a team after months of searching. However, this team did not last long and I had to repeat the process again in the following year since some of our players were from the graduating batch.

Aside from this, by saying yes to this opportunity to compete, I was also committing myself to a lot of responsibilities that came with it. Going to training was not a simple task every week. Since the Blue Eagle Gym and the ASHS buildings were on opposite ends of the big campus, I had to speed walk as soon as the dismissal bell rang. It was a 15-30 minute walk come rain or shine that I had to commit to. Although there was the option to ride the e-jeep, this meant taking time away from training because the travel time was longer than 15 minutes.

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?

Just go for it. It definitely won't be an easy journey. There are times when you'd feel tired from school but then you still have training and a competition. There will be times when you'd have to miss *lakwas*, birthday parties or events with your friends. There are also times when other people will simply not understand why you have to go to training again. Being an athlete can be very lonely because not everyone understands and there are things that you have to sacrifice. However, know that you are not alone. It helps a lot if you are able to find people who you could run to for support during these times. One thing that I was very grateful for in my UAAP journey was that even if I was already playing for a different school, my MGC[NL] coaches, Coach Simeon, Coach Hubert and Coach Grace, were always present to the point that they were literally there in almost every game in the two seasons that I participated in. As long as you're not doing anything wrong, don't be afraid to chase your dream and fight for it. It's worth it.

KELLES QUE [SWIMMING]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

When I graduated from DLSU SHS and decided to continue my studies for college in DLSU as well[,] I realized that I wanted to participate in the UAAP. What motivated me to achieve this goal was the thought of having a different experience as well as getting a scholarship.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

During S82 of the UAAP[,] there were morning trainings from Monday to Saturday along with going to the gym 3 times a week. Trainings usually start at 5:30 but I had to wake up at 4 since I had to drive to school.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

Memorable moments would be training sessions in the gym as well as competing in the UAAP. The lessons I learned was that being a student-athlete is no joke and I really needed to balance academics and training. Time is really consumed and there really is no time to party or go out with friends apart from special occasions.

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?

Tips I would give is that if you want to compete in the UAAP in the future, you need to dedicate the time and effort [for it]. Starting to train for the UAAP even during grade school and high school would certainly give someone an advantage especially if they take the training seriously at a young age. [The] last tip I would give is to not join a team half-heartedly because you will get eaten up by all the demands academically, physically, and mentally.

JOHANSEN AGUILAR [SWIMMING]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

Swimming served as a stepping stone for me to enter college with a scholarship. I knew that if I wanted a scholarship in college, I would have to compete in the UAAP. As early as gradeschool, I was offered a High School Scholarship to Ateneo High School to compete in the UAAP, however, I prioritized my education in MGCNL. Hence, when the time came to enter college, it was already my goal to compete in the UAAP and represent my chosen university.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

The UAAP is a once a year competition, but this does not mean that you should only train months leading up to the meet. As a national swimmer, we were trained to have a mindset to always be prepared and to always keep in shape. This helped me stay focused leading up to the UAAP, but as well as other important competitions such as the SEA GAMES, Asian Championships, and other international meets.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

Most memorable moments would be winning the championship for DLSU - twice (2009, 2011) while being named 3-peat MVP and UAAP Athlete of the Year. However, the most important lessons I will keep to heart is to never be afraid of failure and disappointments. There will always be setbacks, but these are there to make you stronger and resilient to face bigger challenges in life.

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?

Regardless of what sport you are in, dedication, consistency, and commitment is key. There are no shortcuts in the process and you must enjoy the journey, the ups, the downs that you will experience. Do not give up on the first sight of failure and know that whether win or lose, each experience will be a chance for you to grow and mature as an individual as you age and move on to bigger things in life.

SHAYE UY [SWIMMING]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

I first realized I wanted to compete in the UAAP after watching my sister compete in the same competition many years before. I was really drawn to the elevated level of competition, the opportunity to represent my university, and the sense of camaraderie within the team.

I was motivated to achieve this goal because I wanted to be one of the best. My path to excellence in my sport and my passion was precisely the UAAP, because it gave me the opportunity to compete at an elite level.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

The training for a UAAP season is rigorous, and requires physical and mental preparation. In terms of the physical, I was training for 2 hours twice a day everyday alternating between swim and gym sessions. I had to stick to a strict diet and make sure I was also getting enough sleep to

recover. The mental preparation was, at times, much harder than the physical. I had to train my mind to be tough and resilient enough to push away self doubt and the intimidation of the competition. It was not just a one-time thing, but something I had to work on day in and day out even outside the pool. Aside from my personal training, preparation also involved team building, which proved to be very helpful once the season started.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

Some memorable moments I had from the UAAP were bonding with my teammates throughout the season, cheering for them, and them cheering me on. Some of the most profound realizations I have had were in these moments.

My most memorable moment was winning the championship on my very last UAAP season. I had already stopped swimming for about a year before I decided to start training and join the team again for this UAAP season. As expected, it was difficult to get back to where I was. But it was here that I also learned the biggest lessons; that doing my best and having the support of my teammates was more than enough for me, and enough to even win the championship!

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?

I was in the exact place you are right now, training and competing to represent MGC New Life. Although this is where you are currently, and its no small feat, know that you can dream bigger and achieve things you could never even imagine, like competing in the UAAP! With the right mindset, perseverance, grit, and faith, you can get to where you want to be. Just focus on your goal, don't lose sight of it, and have faith throughout the process. I promise it is going to be so worth it when you finally get there!

ABBIE LIM [VOLLEYBALL]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

For me, the UAAP dream came later than it did for most other collegiate athletes. While others often grow up playing their sport and loving the sport that they play, I joined volleyball in Grade 5 and didn't really love the sport until Grade 11. Even before Grade 11, though, my coaches and teammates believed I could be better at volleyball. Even when I showed more enthusiasm for basketball than I did for volleyball, they gave me opportunities to learn about our sport, opportunities to lead our team, and opportunities to shine. My coaches and teammates were one of my biggest motivations to join the UAAP. It was my way of giving back to a community that had given me so much, of thanking them for believing that I could be better, and of helping younger teammates see that it was possible.

Aside from giving back to my coaches and teammates, being a light for God served as another motivator for me. In the wake of Stephen Curry and Jeremy Lin, I saw how powerful sports was as a platform to share God's love. Because of this, I made it a point to have conversations on faith and life with my teammates in UP.

My 3rd motivator for joining the UAAP was to show that athletes could be smart too! When we were in Primary School, we had a Coral Reef sermon about deviating from the Norm. Since hearing that, I made it a point to break stereotypes and go against what was mainstream. I never liked the "dumb jock" stereotype, so I wanted to show that people could pass the UPCAT, be part of a varsity team, and make it to the UAAP lineup.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

The UAAP is one of the largest collegiate leagues in the Philippines. With it comes a lot of media coverage and a lot of pressure. Careers, both of coaches and aspiring professional players, depend on the success of teams during a UAAP season. Because of that, preparation is always very intense. Our team practiced twice a day, every day. While the training schedules weren't set in stone, we often trained from 5:30AM to 8:30AM and then again at 4:00PM to 9:00PM. That was on weekdays. On weekends, we practically spent the whole day (around 10-12 hours) on court -- training. The training schedule has calmed down a bit since I was playing, but training is still twice a day with a 4-6 hour training window on weekends and even some rare occurrences of Sundays off.

When school was on break, we also had training camps that allowed us to focus on volleyball. During these camps, phones were usually collected to minimize distractions. We would wake up, have breakfast as a team, train the whole day, eat, then watch film before going to bed and getting ready for another day packed with volleyball. Needless to say, preparing for the UAAP came with immersing ourselves in volleyball 24/7.

Preparation for the UAAP went beyond just what we did on the court, though. There was a lot of bonding as a team through meals and trips. Making sure our team chemistry was solid before entering the season was so important especially because of the pressure that came with the UAAP. We needed to know that we could count on each other and that we all had the same goals in mind.

Aside from team preparations, we also had events where we met with sponsors, alumni, fans, and media. Having to prepare for photoshoots and interviews was very unique and interesting.

All in all, preparation for the UAAP was a whirlwind of an experience. Thinking about it all now, I'm surprised to have been able to keep up with everything that was going on. I'm sure that those quiet moments in the jeep where I could whisper a prayer or those rare moments where I could just reflect made a significant difference.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

Hmm... It's difficult to handpick the most memorable moments and lessons because the whole experience was so special! Among everything, though, these 4 probably stood out.

- Making the Lineup: "... for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

We were wrapping up training when Coach came out of the varsity office holding the final roster for the UAAP. Chatter turned to silence as we huddled around Coach, nervous to find out which 14 made the final list. With 4 slots left in the lineup, my name, along with a good number of other teammates' names, still hadn't been called. I was preparing for the worst, then, it happened. Coach read my name, making it official that I had made the UAAP lineup.

This is one of the many things in my life that I'm completely sure only happened because of God's grace. The cards had been stacked against me with, first, the increased difficulty of making varsity teams for athletes from small programs. Second, the tall order of making the UAAP lineup when you're a freshman, especially when there are more senior,

more experienced players in the team. And third, the not-so-little problem of being small for a collegiate volleyball player and of having played a tall person's position, middle blocker, since forever.

So, considering all that, you can imagine how happy I was when I heard my name. I was bent on making the most of this opportunity.

- First Game: The big stage can be intimidating (and cold)

We were scheduled to play our first game of the season in the Mall of Asia Arena. We got there around 4 hours before our game was scheduled to give ourselves ample time to warm up. Walking through the player's entrance and entering the dugout was when the magnitude of the UAAP dawned on me. I've watched games at MOA Arena before and, while the arena definitely looked big, the number of people inside always made the arena look just the right size. Entering from the back, though, you realize how gigantic it actually is because, aside from the fact that it really is huge, there's only a handful of people walking around which makes it feel that much bigger.

We entered the dugout, which was also huge, and started to get ready. Some seniors talked to us rookies to help us calm our nerves, we talked as a team to make sure we all knew the game plan, and 3 hours later, we were on the court doing final warm-ups.

Going out onto the court and doing partner drills was intimidating at first. I was aware there was a huge crowd watching even as we warmed up. People expecting UP to do well that season, people wondering whether UP had any rookies to be excited about, and people who just wanted a good match. Aside from that, it was also a lot colder out on the court than it was inside the dugouts. My teammates must have noticed that I was intimidated because one of the seniors pulled me aside and told me to just focus on what's happening on the court. That was great advice.

Once I did that, it was much easier to play well and, eventually, get acclimated to everything. That first match was an intense 5-setter where, thankfully, our team took the win.

- Making the Starting 6: "... if you wanna go far, go with a team."

Our team during UAAP Season 80 was packed with experienced players, so my job that year was to get comfortable in the UAAP environment and learn so I could help lead the team in the next seasons. Of course, even having been told that, I tried my best in training so I could make it into the first 6. Realistically, though, I wasn't expecting to get major playing time. So, it was a huge shock for me when, a week before our second game of the season, Coach announced that I was going to be part of our starting unit.

Coach wanted me to start against the then defending champions DLSU -- I was honored because this was a big role but also scared because, well, this was a big role. The team was so supportive, though. Several seniors, including the rest of the first 6, stayed after practice to give me tips and talk me through what I should do. My batchmates did extra drills with me during breaks and after training. Our coaches gave me material to study for the upcoming game. Everybody helped me get ready for that match and that help paid off! I was able to get good minutes in and that experience went a long way in helping me mentor younger players in the next seasons.

- Last game: Sometimes, things just aren't meant to be

There were a lot of expectations for the UP Team during Season 80 because of the number of veterans we had. We set the goal of at least making it to the final 4 and, if possible, even further. Towards our last few games, however, it was clear we had fallen short of our goal. We lost several games we should have won and that caused us to finish just outside the final 4, making it impossible for us to continue to the semifinals. We were all very disappointed because we knew we could do better. But, as they say, fall down seven times, stand up eight.

The team discussed our shortcomings at length and realigned our goals for the next leagues. We internalized those lessons, took a quick break, then came back to take gold in the 2 major pre-season collegiate volleyball leagues.

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?
 - It's gonna be difficult, so brace yourself

Local sports is moving into an era where it's being professionalized. This means that, even at the high school or elementary level, varsity players know that they want to

become professional athletes. They train twice a day, take shortened holiday and summer breaks (if they take breaks at all), and spend their weekends playing in several different leagues. They have a lot riding on their athletic careers, so they give it everything they have. It's difficult to keep up with, so know that aspiring to compete in the UAAP isn't going to be easy. You'll have to sacrifice, you'll have to work hard, you'll have to show that you want it just as much as your other teammates want it.

Having said that, know that it's also not impossible. If you're willing to give it your all, then the journey and experience is something you'll learn a lot from. Just know what you're getting yourself into.

- Expect to sacrifice

The year we were preparing for the UAAP was probably the year I spent the least time with my family and friends. Training on school days, weekends, and holidays meant that I barely got to go home. When our family would go on vacation, I would take a later flight out and miss a few days of our trip so as not to skip training. I missed several occasions from family dinners to barkada hangouts to batch debuts because I had to train. Don't get me wrong, it was a blast to be with the team all the time, it just wasn't something I was used to.

Actually, I don't think it's something just anyone would be used to. It sounds like such a big deal to us to miss so much time with the people close to us, but for my teammates, it was normal. They spent their whole lives training, barely seeing their families, and having the team as their closest friends. Some of them used to joke that they hadn't had a summer since they were 8 years old, but that's the reality of professional sports. Many come from provinces so the prospect of going home isn't really something they entertain. Many have siblings and parents banking on the success of their sports careers so they can't afford to fail. So, if you dream of playing in the UAAP, expect to sacrifice.

- Know why you're doing it

It takes a lot to make it to collegiate varsity teams. It can get tiring so it's important to know why you're doing what you're doing. Allow this to fuel and motivate you!

- Work harder than anyone else

If you're coming from a small high school program and have never competed in Palarong Pambansa or been part of a national team, the likelihood is that you're starting on the back foot. Your teammates will have credentials that show they can handle the pressure of UAAP and can keep up with stars of other teams.

This was the scenario for me. It was unlikely I would make it to the line up, so I knew I had to work harder than anyone else if I was going to have even a shot at the UAAP. My batchmates and I would do extra work 2 hours before training started and again 1 hour after training ended. I pushed myself to be the fastest, jump the highest, and just be the best when it came to conditioning. I watched how my teammates played and learned from what they were doing. My mindset every day was that I needed to improve so much that Coach can't not put me in the lineup.

- Pace yourself

A mistake I made early in my first year was trying to do everything. I thought that, like in high school, I could be part of the varsity, join orgs, and get good grades. Because of the demands of adjusting to varsity and college classes, it was almost impossible to participate in the application process of college orgs. It also didn't help that UP's campus is huge so getting from one building to another takes time -- getting from my classes to an org tambayan to training was just so much effort.

For anyone hoping to get to college teams, you're better off focusing on varsity and school in your first year then reassessing whether or not you still have time for orgs. Pace yourself, 4 years is a long time.

JIAN TAN [VOLLEYBALL]

1. When did you realize that you wanted to participate in the UAAP? What motivated you to achieve this goal?

I realized that I wanted to participate in the UAAP after watching the Season 74 finals on TV. At the time, I was a huge fan of Alyssa Valdez from ADMU, but my dad was rooting for DLSU. We ended up watching from different rooms, but La Salle won the finals, and I realized how well they played as a team. I was inspired to support the DLSU Lady Spikers from then on, with high hopes

of being able to join their solid team in the future. Given that volleyball is a team sport, I saw past cheering for the skills of one individual and learned to appreciate teamwork and camaraderie more.

2. Not everyone has the chance to compete in the UAAP. What were the things you did to prepare for the season you were participating in?

I was able to train with the DLSU Lady Spikers, if I recall correctly, during the summers of 2015, 2016, and part of 2017. I was still in high school at the time, and I was far from competing at their level. The preparation was mental and physical because there was an expectation that I would continually improve in the years that followed. There's a certain level of maturity expected in volleyball players who hope to participate in the UAAP, so I made sure to surround myself with great mentors from within and outside the team. The Lady Spikers were welcoming and kind to me, but they also knew when to push me, which helped me continue to grow as an athlete and a person.

3. What are some memorable moments and lessons that you had from the UAAP?

Although I got into DLSU and hoped to pursue playing in the UAAP after graduation, there were life events that pushed me to change my mind. Playing in the UAAP was a dream that I had shared with many people, from my family, my coaches, and even my high school teammates, however, I felt called to do something else with my college journey. Instead of sharing a memorable moment from the UAAP, I will share a memorable experience with Coach Ramil de Jesus, the head coach of the DLSU Lady Spikers. I was expressing that I had changed my mind about joining the team, but he was beyond understanding. He explained that unlike me, who has the privilege to choose another path, there are athletes who indeed need the sport to hold onto their scholarships. It was a humbling moment for me, and it gave me a newfound appreciation for the empowerment that sports can actually bring. I guess a lighter memory I would share from our training days was when I was able to meet the athletes that I had looked up to and fangirled about. They became my friends and treated me as one of their own, which I will always be grateful for.

4. What are some tips you would like to give aspiring MGC New Life athletes who would want to compete in the UAAP in the future?

A tip I would give an aspiring UAAP athlete is to be patient with the process. After being able to meet Lasallian athletes from various sports, one thing I realized is that they never focused on the

UAAP as an end goal but it was just an opportunity to bring out the best in themselves and others. Training for the UAAP will be more meaningful than the competition itself because of the bonds you will build day in and day out with your teammates. Moreover, having your whole college community supporting you will push you to keep getting better. Another tip would definitely be not to pressure yourself when you change your mind. Based on my experience, there will always be other opportunities to enjoy your sport and support your fellow athletes, so make the decisions you believe will be best for you.