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Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance podcast. We are so glad that you took the time to download us and are joining us. Every week we bring you an interesting individual for the world of Sports Medicine and Human Performance, and this week is no exception. We have with us on the line from Notre Dame University, Mr. Adam Sargent, welcome to the Podcast Adam

Adam Sargent. Happy to be here Tim, thanks for having me.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. We are so pleased to have you with us and I am gonna tell the audience a little bit about you and while we've got you on here, Adam is currently the associate director in Notre Dames Academic Services for Student Athletes' office. He is one of the two folks that deal as academic advisors for the Notre Dame Football team. He was the star lacrosse player for Notre Dame in the 1990's. He graduated with a double major in History and Anthropology and he has been lauded by all sides, by the Notre Dame Football players in particular. There was a wonderful article, a profile written about Adam on Sports Illustrated that we will link to our show notes, so I will encourage all of you to read that, but in particular all of us are very familiar with Heisman Trophy runner up, Manti Te'o, who claimed that without Adam Sargent there would be no Notre Dame Football. That is a huge claim there, Adam, congratulations!

Adam Sargent. Very gracious on Manti's part.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. One of the things that caught my eye was that the Football team's graduation success rate is the best among division 1 schools, as a matter of fact, Notre Dame, at one time this past year, was the first Football team to be both number one in the polls and number one in the graduation success rate. That is a pretty good accomplishment.

Adam Sargent. Yeah I think that is something that we are very proud of here, I mean, the fact that we have consistently been at or near the top in the GSR over the past several years is something that I think speaks to the culture that you will find at the institution, and I think that is true of all those GSR rates when you look at the institutions you look at the school and you look at the specific rates within the different athletic programs. What you are seeing is a reflection of the overarching culture at those schools in those programs. It's certainly something that I think our office has a hand in but it is typically one part of it. What is most impressive about it is the fact that it was one accompanied by the number one rating in the BCS ranking. What is interesting about that is it is less the fact that we had a number one ranking in the BCS, but I think that you have the ability to achieve excellence in both of those areas. I think that fortunately there is a misperception that you have to compromise

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right, right,

Adam Sargent. The ability to educate students at a high level and to expect them to be engaged and retained and eligible and completing their degree and still have the capacity to compete at the highest levels of football in Division 1 and I think that is achievable and it is something that we are proud of.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Now the NCAA uses several metrics and a graduation success rate is just one of them but that is the one we are talking about and that is basically a measure of how successfully these kids actually graduate, right, the kind of percentage, right?

Adam Sargent. That is accurate, yep; it is the most accurate way of reflecting it. It is more accurate version of graduation rate than the federal rate. There are some minute differences but the idea is that you are tracking not only the students and grant-in-aid who come to you from high school, but you are also tracking people who arrive as transfers, which is something that was not calculated in the federal rate. And it is also taking into account if a student leaves your institution and they leave in good standing. And there are parameters and there are details around what that is. That they are not inherently counting against you if they go on to another four year institution and they go on to have success. So it is, it is a much more accurate way of gauging how those students are doing, not only when they come from high school, but also if they are to transfer in or to transfer out.

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So I think that it does a nice job of that. The other part of it that is important and this is not to take away the dual number one in the BCS and the GSR, but it is important to note that those numbers that we are seeing right now are really earned by students who were here six years ago.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmm, okay.

Adam Sargent. So unlike the APR, which is another measure?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right...

Adam Sargent. Of the specifically the APR is a real time measure of eligibility and retention. The GSR is actually something that is measuring students that are at the institution years ago, because it gives them a window in which to graduate. So it looks at and even more so what the culture is like at the institution over a longer span is how I would look at it.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I hope, if nothing else that the folks that are listening to this understand that this is a complicated issue. You know the NCAA we can say on the surface they want their student athletes to graduate, but how they measure that and how athletic departments have to keep track of that is a really complex issue.

Adam Sargent. It is...It is something that has become more detailed oriented and I think that is important. I think that obviously for many years there were issues with exploitation in Major

Division One Athletics. And I say exploitation not lightly. I am saying that because you had basically a lack of accountability at certain institutions because if they were not graduating at a high. If they were inviting students in that were competing and that were helping to generate revenue for the institution and they were not receiving an education they were not completing their degree. I think that there is an exploitive nature to that and the NCAA of late has made a concerted effort to put in place, like you said, a very detailed measures to ensure that the student athletes are making progress and that they are retained and are eligible and ultimately they are graduating and if they are not doing those things that there are potential penalties in place for the institutions that are failing to meet the acceptable standards.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Well give us some numbers on this. We talked about how you and Notre Dame were ranked #1 in graduation success rate. What is that? Is that 100% or 95% or?

Adam Sargent. You know this past year I think that in 2011 and in 2012 we were at 97% for football student athletes.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Wow! So 97% of your student football athletes graduated.

Adam Sargent. Yep, so that put us at #1 tied with and I hope that I get this right? I think that we were tied with Northwestern this year. They also had a 97% rate for their football student athletes. A number that we had last year and I don't have the 2012 number at my fingertips, but another number that we thought was a really important piece to look at was the 2011 GSR for our African-American football student athletes and we are very proud to say that was 100%.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Wow...Congratulations.

Adam Sargent. Thank you...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. That's a great job. And you talk about the culture being different at Notre Dame. How is the culture different there and what leads to the success?

Adam Sargent. It is an institutional dynamic that our office is part of it. You know we report autonomist to the Athletic Department. We are housed in the Provost Office and I think that is an important distinction.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. So you're not in the Athletics Department and you don't report to the Athletics Department.

Adam Sargent. We are completely separate from Athletics. Right, we are housed in a different area and are reporting and budgets are all underneath the Provost Office. And I think that is a really important point to make and it's not that you can't advocate well for student athletes if you are working in an athletic department in our capacity. I am not saying it is impossible to do so, but there is always going to be tensions that exist between the academic side and the athletic side in Division One athletics. It can be a healthy tension, but for it to be a healthy tension there

needs to be autonomy and there needs to be checks and balances. You have got to have the ability when you are advocating for a student's educational best interest you have to have the ability to have independence. And if you reach an impasse with the Athletic Department regardless of whatever you're trying to achieve. It is important that there can be healthy independent discussion and discourse and not have your voice quieted because you boss doesn't agree with you and ultimately the Athletic Director. So it is important that we have the support of the Provost and the ability to discuss things in a healthy form like that. So that is one dynamic that allows us to do our job really well and Notre Dame. The other part of it and you talked about the overall culture.

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Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yep, yep...

Adam Sargent. Is that you look at our standards and our eligibility standards for starting are higher than what the NCAA requires at its minimum, right? So when you look at our eligibility standards in terms of semester to semester in the NCAA it requires that for you to be eligible you need to pass six hours, six credit hours.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Uh, hmmm.

Adam Sargent. In the previous semester. For us we have eligibility that in your first semester as a freshman you have to get a 1.7 GPA.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Ok.

Adam Sargent. In your second semester as a first year student you have to have a 1.85 and then every semester there after you have to have a 2.0.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Ok.

Adam Sargent. So you could have a student who ultimately gets all C-'s, but passes 15 credit hours and has a 1.67 GPA and they are ineligible to play the next semester.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmm.

Adam Sargent. So what you are looking at is a bar that is set higher and by having a bar that is set higher you have students that are striving to meet those standards each semester. And that helps us in the measurable. It helps us in terms of students making progress towards their degree, but it also helps us establish or try to establish the aspiration for maximizing your abilities, right? This is not about staying eligible and this is not about being retained or simply graduating. This is about really challenging yourself to get the absolute most out of this experience. And in the process I think that it reflects that our numbers are really respectable.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Let me back up. You talked about the different eligibility requirements. Do you have a different recruitment requirement as well? So you won't look at an athlete unless they have a certain SAT score that is higher than the NCAA minimum? Do ya'll do that or do you say that you will take any athlete and you can have them graduate?

Adam Sargent. No I think that you always have to be very aware of who you are inviting to your campus.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmm. Ok.

Adam Sargent. This is something that I think is true across the country. Schools are always trying to look at...and I hope that they are...each individual, their profile including SAT or ACT, GPA, quality of high school, right? And then look at the intangibles...Who the person is and what environment are they coming from and what are they aspiring for? What do they hope to do? And by looking at each student as an individual you are trying to invite students, one that are going to be interested in being a part of your schools culture.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. And two, that they have they have the ability to really be successful with the curriculum that is available at your institution. Notre Dame's curriculum is challenging and as a result the Admissions Office and the Coaching Staff have to be selective as they are evaluating who will be a good fit at Notre Dame? Now you asked originally what those standards are and I can tell you that there are not a firm profile, there is not a line in the sand that has been established. It really is almost an art form to look at each individual and to make that assessment. Part of it is that you have to trust the coaches that they understand the culture at the school and that they are going to recruit students and people that are going to want to be at Notre Dame and be a good fit. And then you have the next level and that is the Admission's Office that they are going to do a nice job of evaluating the profiles of those students and if they believe that there is somebody that is ill-equipped to be successful that they are going to have the capacity and that they are going to have the conviction which they do. And if they don't they say this is not a good fit for Notre Dame. That happens at times and I can tell you that the spectrum, in terms of profiles that I work with, it is a broad spectrum. We have a lot of diversity in our football student athletes, as to who they are and what their profiles are when they arrive here. And it is often a real challenge because of that. Because their profiles are different than the standard student at Notre Dame, many of them.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Well, Adam over my 20 some odd years in academia and several which were in administration one of the things that I always noticed about athletes in particular, especially that has changed since I went to school, is that so often now days athletes are siloed into certain majors because they fit practice times or whatever. So you have kids going into things that maybe they are not as interested in.

Adam Sargent. Right.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. What role does that play, as you bring recruits in and you start to help them decide what kind of majors they want to go into? Is that totally up to them? How does that work?

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Adam Sargent. No that is always going to be the student's decision. And if you find a dynamic at some place where the students are not making that decision that is an issue of concern, for sure. That is where you start to see the filtering process or the funneling process and I would say that is not something that is a healthy dynamic to have. So we always will work with the student and help to expose them to different options at Notre Dame and the important part here, Tim, is that it is not just our office doing this.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Sure, right.

Adam Sargent. We do not duplicate the role of other academic services or academic units on campus and that includes advising offices. We work in conjunction with the advisors in the first year of studies and we work in conjunction with the faculty advisors and the colleges and the majors. And if something that is important for us to allow the students to have some time to look at the different things that are available and to try out different areas of interest and settle on something that they are going to find stimulating. Something that they are going to be passionate about and they are going to pursue. One of the nice dynamics that working in a place like Notre Dame is that we don't have a path of less resistance.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmm...Ok

Adam Sargent. We don't have an area or a major that student athletes or weak student athletes talk to...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right, right.

Adam Sargent. And that is a really great thing. We have got really good distribution of our student athletes across colleges and majors. And that is a really great thing. If you ever encounter that and if you see a high percentage of a particular profile of student athlete gravitating towards one major...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right, right.

Adam Sargent. I think rightfully there should be some scrutiny and the institution should take a look and see why that trend is occurring. And that is something thankfully that we don't encounter at Notre Dame.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Adam, how do you guys deal with the fact that some major programs basically have things like labs in the afternoons that might conflict with practice?

Adam Sargent. Yeah...we work really closely with the different Dean's offices in an effort to ensure that there are courses available in windows that will allow our student athletes to be fully present for both their academic responsibilities and their athletic responsibilities. At the end of the day though if there is a conflict and if a student is Pre-Med or if a student is engineering, there is only one answer and that is they attend class, right? That is the priority and that will always be the priority and we are going to work hard to make sure that they have opportunities to do both and it is really a shame if it ever occurs where you are making a decision between the two. Because both endeavors their athletics and their academics are really great and important parts of their collegiate experience. So when it comes down to it and if there ever is a conflict we are always going to support the student to pursue the academic piece to ensure that they are taking what they need to get that education. Thankfully that rarely happens here.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah...

Adam Sargent. And Tim I go back to the whole healthy pension piece. I go back to why our office works autonomously and this is a great example, right? I mean I don't think that this is uncommon on college campuses when you are working with student athletes, is to take into account practice times. When coaches want to have practice and there is always an on-going discussion between our office and the coaches to ensure that practice time is not unfairly encroaching on the windows in which students need to have those classes available to them.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah.

Adam Sargent. To ensure that they are getting the education that you promised them. That is where you have the importance of autonomy, because we can dig our heels in and say this is an important piece. This needs to be available and this course ensues and the coaches are very supportive here about that. They know that you can do both and that you can do them both well.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. We've been talking about Notre Dame and what you do at Notre Dame which is great and that you have a lot of experience in, but you had a lot of life experiences as well that have led you to this spot. And I think I would like to pull back and maybe have you address what an up and coming athlete maybe coming out of high school, going to college for the first time. what are the big things that they should remember as they enter college?

Adam Sargent. That is a great question...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah.

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Adam Sargent. That is a great question and that gets to the heart of what we do in this office. We talk about selecting majors and we talked about doing it. Those are all important pieces, but the most important part of what we do is to help the student athletes in their transition from high school to college, right?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. That is the most important part...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. That is a huge transition...

Adam Sargent. It is a huge transition and even for the most accomplished student athletes, those who have excelled in high school academics, you are going to have to negotiate some significant shifts as you arrive on a college campus, regardless of where you are going. What we focus on in that and what I would tell student athletes who are preparing to make that transition, is that habits are essential to success. You need to be aware of the importance of working consistently, of disciplining yourself to make good use of the time that is available to you every day throughout the week. And making sure that you are plugging in to the resources that are available to you on that college campus that will support you both in an office like ours, taking advantage of content tutoring and taking advantage of the guidance that we provide that deals with organization, time management. That challenges students to change their habits when necessary. And we all know, Tim, change is hard. It is not easy to change your habits. That is a really difficult thing, especially when your habits help you achieve great success.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. Students we are working with have been successful, so sometimes it is hard for students when a certain set of habits and approach have yielded success. To think that you need to make changes to that, but you do. Because the challenges and the demands are inherently more rigorous when you are coming to a university.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Uh...hmm

Adam Sargent. So being open to the challenge that people will set in front of you to refine those habits. That is an essential part of it. The consistency cannot be stressed enough. You don't have the capacity to do last minute work and to have it be a reflection of your best effort. It is impossible, to like not do an all-nighter and to neglect responsibility for weeks on end and expect yourself to be able to produce something of quality.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Isn't that part of growing up though? We all learn that at some point.

Adam Sargent. Absolutely. And that is where you know to have time off and to really have time to socialize and you can be a college kid. To earn that you need to discipline yourself each and every day to use the free time that is available to you, even if you don't have a test for two or three or four weeks.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. You need to be preparing for that weeks in advance, chipping away to ensure that you are keeping up with the material and that you are not going to get overwhelmed at the

last minute. That you are cultivating the habits that you need that are going to allow you to be successful in college, but most importantly this is in preparation for the rest of your life.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah.

Adam Sargent. This is disciplining yourself to recognize that you need to be working hard each and every day.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And see I was just thinking as you talked here that these are good things to all college students.

Adam Sargent. Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Take account of. This is not just for student athletes. Everything that you said applies to every student at every college campus.

Adam Sargent. There is no question. And I will tell you what, I work with student athletes. That is the population I work with, but there are a lot of people, students and former students, who may listen to this and they may not have been student athletes, but they may have had a full-time job while they were in college. They may have been caring for sibling when they were in college. They may have been, who knows, what other responsibilities take on a huge part of your life and require you to be disciplined and to be detailed oriented and to keep up with a consistent routine. It just so happens that my populations have athletic commitments everyday and each and every week, right?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. Like you said, what is true for this population is true for any college student.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah, yeah...Let's shift the focus back to you a little bit. What driving force motivates you? Why did you come to this and why do you get so passionate about this?

Adam Sargent. Yeah...I am interested in the landscape of college athletics. I enjoy working with student athletes, but the athlete part...the athletic competition part, the sport itself is of less interest to me. My passion is working with young people and helping them prepare for the rest of their lives.

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I, through a lot of my own experiences, but just through my professional life, as well, have come to recognize that there aren't very few guarantees in life, if any? Life is filled with adversity and there are circumstances that are going to arise that will challenge you sometimes to your core.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmmm.

Adam Sargent. And the only way that students can position themselves, that young people I should say, can position themselves to have resiliency and to have options, to have the ability to success in spite of adversity is if they are aggressive in receiving the best education that is available to them . That is the only thing that they can absolutely control.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. A big part of what I talk about, Tim, with the students that I work with; is to take ownership over their responsibilities and their choices.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. There are a lot of things that are out of our control, right?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right.

Adam Sargent. But, I would say that the majority of things are in our control. Sometimes we don't want to recognize that and sometimes we don't want to admit it. But, you...if you make good choices have the capacity to really position yourself to have great options.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Hmm...Um.hum...

Adam Sargent. If a student is willing to recognize that and to work harder than they ever have before, day in and day out, even if difficult circumstances come their way, whether that is potential injury or adversity within their family? Whether it is financial in nature or physical? If you have a great foundation of education you are going to have the ability to handle that adversity in a much more constructive fashion. You know I was involved in a car accident and I think as you are aware, in my junior year of college and it left me paralyzed from the chest down and obviously it was a very traumatic experience in my life. Luckily I had worked really hard in those first three years. Luckily I made the decision as student athlete to attend a place like Notre Dame that challenged me.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Uh...hmmm.

Adam Sargent. And on the back end of my accident it became very clear that I was going to have limited options professionally. Large part because of the disability. It was driven home with great clarity that I was going to need to rely on my intellect and on my inner personal capacity.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Uh.hmmm.

Adam Sargent. And on my work ethic. To find a position that would allow me to not only have a good living, but joy and a passion for what I do. If I had not pursued an education at a place like Notre Dame, if I had not refined my skills intellectual and inner personal, I would have been left with drastic fewer options in my circumstances.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Right..

Adam Sargent. That is always in the back of my head and when I look at my students and when I work with my students I hope the world unfolds in front of them. I hope...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Don't us all... (Laughing)

Adam Sargent. Yes! But I also know that there will be difficulties on the horizon. What I am passionate about is helping those young people empower themselves with a wonderful education and to challenge them to recognize what they have control over and to take ownership of those decisions and ensure that they are making choices that will allow them to have a stable and successful adult life. That is what drives me.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Because in the end, and you are the best example of this, it is how you respond to these things that life throws at you to determine how successful you will be in life.

Adam Sargent. Absolutely...There is always going to be pieces that are challenging and that are difficult and that are unforeseen and it is important that you have a world view, an educational foundation and the resiliency to be able to confront those challenges in a constructive way and to work through them in your best possible capacity and to continue having meaningful engagement with those around you, both personally and professionally.

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And that is something that we get better at as the years go by. It has to start when you are in college. It has to start before you are in college if you are really going to ensure opportunities are available to you.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. I think that our audience can see why you have received such accolades from the athletes that you have worked for. Because you are certainly passionate about what you are doing.

Adam Sargent. Well I appreciate that...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah, we could probably sit here and talk for another hour about this, but we are running close on time...

Adam Sargent. Ok..

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. And as we do with all of our guest we want to give you the opportunity to give a take home message for the audience. What is the one thing that you want the audience to remember after they listen to this podcast?

Adam Sargent. I would say that my mantra, if you want to call it that? Is to own it. Own your stuff. Own your issues. Own your challenges. Own your poor decisions, because by taking

ownership, by being honest with yourself and recognizing and accepting the fact that we are all wonderfully flawed, we are all human. We are all going to make mistakes. The only way for you to really grow. The only way for you to empower yourself and become potent, is to recognize your contributions to difficulties in your life. Ask yourself what role did I have in that situation? Be honest and take ownership of it. Look at it and by doing so the next time you encounter a situation like that you can chose differently. You assert your control over your own choices. Over your own behaviors and by doing so you become potent and you become empowered and you are able to grow as a person. So I would say own it.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Super take home message, I think one that everybody in society needs to own it right now.

Adam Sargent. Agreed...

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Yeah, so Adam thank you for taking time to be with us today. We have really enjoyed having you on.

Adam Sargent. I appreciate it Tim, thank you and take care.

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Ok...and I will tell the audience here that you will be hearing more from Adam through the Huffines Institute and we will make those announcements in the near future. But in the meantime if what you are waiting on is to hear the podcast question of the week for that podcast t-shirt. And so here is one of our producers Kelly with the podcast question of the week.

Kelly. What is the most important part of a student's college career an academic advisor focuses on?

Dr. Tim Lightfoot. Super question, be the first one to e-mail us with the correct answer to that question and you will win one of our nifty free podcast t-shirts, but you had better hurry up because we are running out of the second edition t-shirts and you want to make sure that you have one of those so you have a complete collection. In the meantime, again thank you Adam for being with us and really great chatting with you today.

Adam Sargent. I appreciate it Tim and thank you...

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