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DOWN, SET, HUT!

ANTHONY ATKINS JR. '23 SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT-ATHLETE ON THE FOOTBALL TEAM.

by [Anthony Atkins Jr. '23](#) | November 30, 2022

Read time: about 2 min

What is it like to play college football for Christopher Newport University? I'm happy to tell you all about it! But first things first: when you commit to play football for CNU, you commit to academics. Academics *always* come first at Christopher Newport.

As a freshman or a transfer student-athlete, you're required to attend study hall your first semester. You're also assigned academic success coaches who will cheer you on and keep you focused. All athletes are required to meet with their academic success coaches once a week. During these meetings, we let them know if we're struggling in certain classes. The coaches offer advice on how to improve our study habits and bring our grades up. They also lend an ear for anything else that might be on our mind. This system helps us to succeed and balance the demanding life of being a college athlete. Because it *is* demanding—perhaps more than you might imagine.

Now, back to football!

This is what a typical Monday looks like:

1. Your alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m., and you head over to McMurrin Hall for the 6:15 team meeting.
2. Coach picks specific plays from the previous Saturday's game, and breaks down what went well and what we need to work on.
3. From 7:00-7:50 we hold position meetings, then head off to class.
4. After classes are over, I head to the locker room, attend another quick position meeting, then practice begins at 3:30 p.m. and runs until 5:30.

I love being a part of the team. I work hard all week, and the promise of playing on Saturday keeps me motivated. Let me tell you, there is nothing better than wearing a Captains uniform! There is no feeling quite like running onto Kelchner Field at TowneBank stadium in front of 5,000 cheering fans. It sends goosebumps down your body and nearly takes the breath out of you for a quick second.

As for our fan base, we have the best of the best. No matter what time of day or what kind of weather, our stands are always filled with parents, students, alumni, faculty and sometimes recruits. Whether we are winning or losing, the fans are always there to support us and cheer us on.

When we have an away game, I've noticed there are typically very few fans in attendance for the other school. In fact, it often seems like there are more athletes on the field at these schools than fans in the stands. It's just another reminder of how special Christopher Newport is. At other schools, you hear faint cheering and clapping. Like, no band? Really?

Sure, a few schools have bands. But there is not a single band that comes close to ours. Every time we play at home, I know the away team is going to hate how much our band plays a role in revving up our crowd. Our Marching Captains get into the head of the other team, play music in between plays and cheer us on when we come onto the field. They are truly the best.

Staying in shape is incredibly important, so during the week we get in a minimum of two lifts. The weight room in Ratcliffe Hall is one of the nicest weight rooms I have seen at the Division III level. We also have great locker rooms. If you're a varsity athlete at Christopher Newport, there are some additional perks as well. The university has a contract with Under Armour, so all our game uniforms, practice uniforms, workout clothes, shoes, cleats, and anything else you can think of is all provided by Under Armour and the school. We also have a terrific equipment staff. If it weren't for this staff, we wouldn't be able to go out on Saturdays and play the way we do.

Being a student-athlete has its ups and downs, but it's all worth it to play the sport you love every Saturday. I would go back to my freshman year and do it all over again if I could, but football is only temporary, and I still have my whole life ahead of me. Go Captains!



Anthony Atkins Jr.