

CHAP. 3 COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Romain Mouisset



Image pixabay

3.1. Anticipation.

Do some Internet research: which US universities are particularly famous for their athletic achievements?

Look at these pictures: what makes US colleges differ so much from European ones, be it in sport or in academics in general?



Overall, what makes US sport differ so much from European sport, be it professional or recreational?

Do you think sport plays a sufficient role in your university?

3.2. Listening

Recording 3.a. Basketball champion Trenton Meacham remembers his years as a college athlete

We met 2016 Pro A basketball champion and ASVEL shooting guard Trenton Meacham, and we asked him to go down memory lane and recall his years as an NCAA player at American universities.

Before listening: do some research and learn a few things about Trent Meacham's college and professional career.

Global comprehension: listen once and say whether these statements are true or false. (Justify when necessary)

- When he was a young boy, Trenton dreamed of becoming a professional basketball player.
- When he was a student, Trenton only played for the University of Illinois.
- Trenton has never played for an NBA team.
- Trenton has played in three European countries: Austria, Italy and France.
- Between his experiences in Paris and Nanterre, Trenton considered retiring.
- In Italy, Trenton played for the team owned by Silvio Berlusconi.
- Trenton has been Pro A champion with two different teams.
- Trenton found it too hard to be a student athlete in a U.S. college

Detailed comprehension: listen again and answer these questions with full sentences, in your own words or by quoting the interview.

- What is the "red shirt" status in college basketball? Why did the NCAA create this status? Does Trenton seem to approve of this principle? Why or why not?
- What were the two teams that Trenton supported when he was younger, and why?
- Give at least three reasons why Trenton found it so exciting to play basketball in college.

Listen carefully and complete these sentences from the interview.

- (0:25) "It was a dream _____ to continue playing as long _____."
- (4:49) "It can be difficult _____ the demands of playing a sport (...) while still _____ an education, which can be pretty _____ as well."

Recording 3.b. ASVEL coach and Pro A champion J.D. Jackson compares college athletics in the U.S., Canada and France.

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

After talking to Trenton Meacham, we had a chance to meet his coach, former Canada international and 2016 Pro A champion J.D. Jackson. We asked him about his trajectory and about his opinion on college sport on both sides of the Atlantic.

Global comprehension: listen once and say whether these statements are true or false. (Justify when necessary)



J.D. Jackson. Crédit photo Jean-Charles Mengui

- J.D. Jackson attended a university in Vancouver, Canada.
- J.D. Jackson played in the NBA before going to Europe.
- He spent most of his career in France.
- College studies are as expensive in Canada as they are in the U.S.
- J.D. says sports and education are intrinsically linked in the U.S.
- Canada has a weak pro basketball league.
- All the Canadian student athletes who want to reach the elite try to go to American universities.
- J.D. regrets not having the same school system in France as in Canada.
- J.D.'s children don't practice any sports at all.

Detailed comprehension: listen again and answer these questions with full sentences, in your own words or by quoting the interview.

- What does J.D. Jackson blame the French school system for? And what does he think should change?
- Which adjective does J.D. Jackson use to express his opinion. Why?
- When he was a student in Canada, what did J.D. particularly appreciate on weekends?

Listen carefully and complete these sentences from the interview.

- (1:00) "It's similar, sort of _____ between the experience in France and the experience in the U.S., that is _____ there's a lot of sports teams and high level play, but the _____ is the education."
- (2:25) "It's like going to an American university but it's a little more _____ and education-_____."
- (4:24) "I don't think it's _____ to go to school in France _____ in North America."

3.3. Reading.

American universities have a lot of different traditions and specificities that we sometimes fail to understand, from graduation ceremonies to wild parties. They also have a singular way of teaching, promoting and organizing sports. The following texts will help you understand these specificities and go beyond clichés.

Read the texts below and answer the questions:

Text 3.a. College athletics in the US and in Europe: worlds apart

1 On European campuses, sport is viewed mainly as a leisure activity, with only
2 a few instances of elite university events (including *The Boat Race*, the famous
3 rowing contest that has opposed Oxford and Cambridge since 1829, in the U.K.).

4 In France, many students practice recreational sports but very few take part in
5 high-level competitions. For those who are athletic and want to work in the sport
6 business or in a sport-related profession (coach, PE teacher, event organizer,
7 etc.), the STAPS degree offers a curriculum based on both physical activity and
8 theoretical courses like sport management and psychology. But even for STAPS
9 students, the inter-college competitions do not attract large crowds on campus,
10 and are hardly ever given media coverage.

11 In European countries, those who strive for a professional career or want to
12 compete at a high level join local clubs. These academies, which are affiliated to
13 government-funded organizations, recruit young athletes and develop them, but
14 they are usually separated from the higher education system. As a consequence,
15 professional athletes who get the chance to sign contracts with an elite football or
16 rugby club seldom have college degrees. Furthermore, a lot of European athletes
17 are recruited at a very young age, which raises ethical questions.

18 In the U.S., being both an athlete and a university graduate is absolutely not
19 contradictory. Indeed, colleges, not clubs, feed the professional system. Although
20 not all professional sportsmen and sportswomen have a college education (many
21 are signed after high school, while others drop out after one year in order to join
22 professional franchises), it is estimated that around 20% of NBA players and as
23 many as 50% of NFL players have a college degree. Enough to debunk the
24 stereotype of dumb sportsmen...!

25 If you study in the U.S. and want to become a professional athlete or are
26 simply good enough to compete at a high level, you can participate in interstate
27 tournaments sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA,
28 the equivalent of the NBA, NFL, NHL... at college level). Top NCAA events are
29 almost as popular and widely followed as professional games, if not more! In fact,
30 most professional teams are franchises with limited local rooting: some states
31 have no NFL or NBA franchise, and if they have one, it may be relocated to
32 somewhere else if the owner sees fit to do it (for instance, the Lakers played in

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Minneapolis until 1960, when they moved to L.A.). As a result, many Americans feel more attached to their local college team, even if they did not attend it.

Some figures are astounding compared to Europe. For example, eight U.S. campus stadiums can host more than 100,000 spectators for football games (Michigan, Penn State, Alabama, etc.) and in 2015, almost 30 million U.S. TV viewers watched the "March Madness" basketball finals that pitted Duke against Wisconsin – more than the NBA finals!

Many players that make it to the professional level keep supporting the college team they used to play for. For example basketball superstar Michael Jordan remains a faithful supporter of his former college, and he is said to have worn his North Carolina shorts underneath his Chicago Bulls outfit throughout his career, for good luck and to pay tribute to his alma mater.

Not all U.S. colleges have highly competitive teams - some, like Harvard and Yale, do not give priority to their sport results, and compete in minor divisions. For less prestigious state universities, on the other hand, the publicity of elite NCAA events is essential in order to get national recognition and visibility.

Even if you just want to practice sports at a recreational level, you will have plenty of possibilities in the varsity system. There are weekly training and frequent games against other universities, and you can enjoy state-of-the-art facilities like Olympic swimming pools, climbing walls and a multitude of tennis courts and gyms.

However, the success of US college athletics comes at a price. With yearly tuition fees ranging from about \$10,000 to more than \$50,000, student athletes must often rely on scholarships and loans. One of the reasons why these tuition fees are so high is because universities invest millions of dollars in large, brand new facilities, stadiums and arenas so as to promote their campuses, while only a few colleges produce substantial revenue from sport programs. A lot of analysts criticize this spending spree that makes many colleges unaffordable and has turned campuses into luxurious resorts.

There are other debates and controversies. For example, some colleges are blamed for laying too much emphasis on sports, at the expense of academic fields like art and sciences. They are also criticized for granting huge scholarships to promising athletes, instead of helping deserving students from underprivileged areas. The question of paying student athletes is also a burning issue and, finally, student athletes are regularly accused of enjoying a privileged status and committing fraud

Vocabulary.

Find the translations of these words in paragraphs 1 to 3 of text 3.a.:

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Un loisir, l'aviron, un diplôme, le programme (scolaire / universitaire), la foule, presque jamais, ambitionner, former, rarement

Find the translations of these words in paragraphs 4 to 8:

Alimenter, abandonner ses études, le propriétaire, juger bon de..., accueillir, opposer X à Y, continuer de..., ex/ancien(ne), rendre hommage.

Find the translations of these words in paragraphs 9 to 11:

Dernier cri, les équipements, les frais de scolarité, une bourse, un prêt bancaire, les recettes (fiscales), inabordable, une station de vacances, mettre l'accent sur..., au détriment de..., méritant, défavorisé.

Explain these words and expressions from text 3.a. in your own words:

Debunk (l.23), alma mater (l.44), spending spree (l.60), a burning issue (l.66)

Comprehension questions.

True or false? Say whether the following statements are true or false and justify by quoting from the text :

- High-level sport competitions do not exist in French universities.
- More professional athletes have college degrees in the US than in Europe.
- In the US, college sport is not as popular as professional sport.
- Institutions like Harvard don't have great sport teams because they don't have enough money.
- Studying in the U.S. can be very expensive.
- All American universities make a lot of money thanks to sports.
- Some people think sport should not play such an important role in US colleges.

Answer the following questions in your own words :

- In your opinion, why do so few French students practice sports on campus?
- Focus on the third paragraph: in your opinion, why does the recruitment of young athletes in Europe raise "ethical questions"?
- Why are a lot of Americans more inclined to support college teams than professional franchises?
- Why is it so crucial for some colleges to have very competitive sport teams?
- Why do you think the status of student athletes is envied by other students?

Text 3.b. Jackson opens up about his life as a student athlete

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Extracted from: higheredjobs.com – September 17, 2003

1 "College athlete" is a frequently misunderstood term full of preconceived
2 notions and stereotypes. As I enter my senior year I'm thrilled to have the
3 opportunity to clear up some of the misconceptions and share the experience. A
4 student soccer player spends 40-50 hours a week on soccer and soccer related
5 activities. For most people, that's a full-time job. For college athletes, it's in
6 addition to their course load.

7 Speaking of course loads, let's talk about the numerous absences from labs
8 and lectures that inevitably occur. Imagine taking a course that is challenging for
9 most students. Now imagine missing at least a day's worth of lectures every
10 week during the regular season. You are not only behind the rest of the class, but
11 you are on the road. You have to teach yourself the missed material from the
12 back of a bumpy bus, an airplane, or in the computer room of a hotel. There's no
13 professor or TA present to ask questions or review a difficult chapter; there's just
14 you and your textbook.

15 Of course, if you don't succeed, and you do poorly in school your eligibility or
16 scholarship can be taken, your place on the squad is jeopardized, and before you
17 know it you're off the team and out of school.

18 If it's so hard, why do it? Although scholarship money helps me pay for
19 school, that was not why I chose to be a student athlete. For me, it has always
20 been primarily about the pride I feel when I run onto the field representing my
21 school. Being a college athlete isn't easy, but for me, it's worth it.

Vocabulary

Find the translations of the following words in text 3.b.:

*Un malentendu, une charge de travail, un TP, un cours magistral, mettre en péril,
une bourse, la fierté, ça vaut le coup*

Find the synonyms of the following words in text 3.b.:

A cliché, very excited, many, happen, difficult (x2), a team

Comprehension questions

True or false? Say whether the following statements are true or false and justify by quoting from the text :

- Jackson wrote this article when he was a third-year college student.
- He wrote this article to defend his status as a student athlete.
- The academic curriculum of student athletes is smaller than that of other students.
- Studying as a college athlete can be a lonely experience.
- Jackson regrets having chosen to be a student athlete.

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Answer the following questions in your own words :

- In your opinion, what are the "stereotypes" and "misconceptions" about student athletes mentioned by Jackson in his introduction? (you may use expressions of reproach like "blame" or "accuse")
 - Guess why Jackson spends so much time in planes, buses and hotels.
 - Why are studies so much harder for college athletes? (min. 50 words)
 - Reformulate the two consequences faced by student athletes who don't succeed academically. (Try to start your argument with the expression "not only... but also")
-
- Further reading: Read text 3.c. on the ambiguous status of cheerleaders on American campuses and try to understand:
 - why cheerleaders are not treated seriously by the NCAA.
 - why cheerleaders want to be considered as student athletes.
 - Further reading: Read text 3.d. and summarize president Obama's position on NCAA athletes.

3.4. Grammar.

Leçon: le comparatif

Le texte 3.a., qui confronte la vision du sport dans les campus européens et américains, nous donne l'occasion de revoir brièvement le fonctionnement du comparatif en anglais.

Comparatif de supériorité

Pour un adjectif long (deux syllabes ou plus): MORE + LONG ADJ. + THAN...

Pour un adjectif court (une syllable ou deux si l'adjectif se termine par "y" – ex: happy, silly...): SHORT ADJ. + -ER + THAN...

(Comparatifs irréguliers: good => better / bad => worse / far => further)

Exemples : Sport events are more frequent on US campuses than in European colleges.

Paul claims that swimming is harder than rock-climbing.

Comparatif d'égalité

Quelle que soit la longueur de l'adjectif, on a: AS + ADJ. + AS...

Exemples : Football is as popular as basketball on US campuses.

Comparatif d'égalité

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Là encore, la taille de l'adjectif n'a pas d'importance. On peut utiliser:
La formule la plus authentique : NOT AS + ADJ. + AS... (on nie l'égalité)
Une formule moins formelle, mais fréquente: LESS + ADJ. + THAN...

Exemples : French college stadiums aren't as big as American ones.
For French students, a college education is less expensive than
for their American counterparts.

Parfois le comparatif ne porte pas sur un adjectif mais sur un verbe ou un
groupe nominal – ex: Jennifer practices more than Luke. / He works as much
as I do. / He ate more popcorn than I did while watching the game.

Leçon: V-ING en position sujet

Dans le texte 3.b., Jackson conclut son témoignage par la formule "Being a college athlete is not easy, but for me, it's worth it." La présence d'un verbe suivi d'-ING peut surprendre en début de phrase, mais elle est tout à fait naturelle pour un verbe placé en position sujet, et plus authentique que "the idea of..." / "the fact that..."

Exemples : Studying in the US is an unforgettable but costly experience.
Smoking kills.
Running everyday is the best way to keep fit.

Exercises

Among the following 6 sentences, 5 contain a mistake: spot these mistakes and correct them.

- Everybody agrees that Harvard is as prestigious than Yale.
- Kathrin told me that live in Paris was her lifetime dream.
- The football team of the University of Nebraska is not as impressive as it used to be.
- Football games last more longer than basketball games.

3.5. Translation.

Translate the following sentences into French:

- Text 3.a. lines 40-44: Many players that make it to the professional level keep supporting the college team they used to play for. For example basketball superstar Michael Jordan remains a faithful supporter of his former college, and he is said to have worn his North Carolina shorts underneath his Chicago Bulls outfit throughout his career, for good luck and to pay tribute to his alma mater.
- Text 3.b. lines 18-21: If it's so hard, why do it? Although scholarship money helps me pay for school, that was not why I chose to be a student athlete. For me, it has always been primarily about the pride I feel when I run onto the field representing my school. Being a college athlete isn't easy, but for me, it's worth it.

3.6. Speaking.

Debate: Do you think student athletes that compete in major NCAA should be paid? You will find a lot of arguments in favor of / against this idea on the Internet, as that is a recurring issue in the media and on campuses.

Do some research on the Internet and choose an American university that offers great conditions for the sport you practice. Then make a presentation illustrated by a slide show to explain why you picked this college and how you plan to join it next year (this is all fictional, of course). Don't forget to emphasize the academic assets of your future college, as well as other arguments like lifestyle, geography, reputation, etc.

3.7. Writing.

Weigh the pros and the cons of being a student athlete in an American college. (Try to use "on the one hand... on the other hand...")

Do you think the American vision of college athletics could be imitated in French universities?

Do you envy the status of college athletes enjoyed by American students?

If your university gave you the opportunity to spend a year in an American university and be a student athlete, would you accept? Justify your answer.

Appendix 1. Vocabulary

Leçon: l'expression du reproche

Quatre formules principales permettent d'exprimer le reproche en anglais. Elles ont un point commun: elles sont suivies du verbe à la forme V-ing ou d'un groupe nominal. Elles sont aussi très authentiques lorsqu'elles sont utilisées à la voix passive.

- Blame somebody for + V-ing / GN
- Criticize sb for + V-ing / GN
- reproach sb for / with + V-ing / GN
- accuse sb of + Ving / GN

Exemples : US student athletes are often blamed for being lazy.
His professor reproached him for not jumping high enough.
He was criticized for dropping out after only eight months
Some students accuse athletes of cheating in exams and (of) not working as much as they do.

Leçon: les quantifieurs

Le texte 3.a. propose plusieurs quantifieurs qui permettent de varier le lexique et changent des traditionnels "many" et "some". Quelques exemples:

In France, few students take part in sport competitions.

In the US, there are plenty of opportunities for sport lovers.

Quantité petite ou insuffisante: (a) few / (a) little

Pour exprimer une petite quantité, on utilise A FEW devant un nom dénombrable et A LITTLE devant un indénombrable. Si on enlève l'article A, alors la connotation est négative: on exprime l'insuffisance.

Exemple: I have a few friends (quelques un, on ne se plaint pas) vs. I have few friends (nombre insuffisant)

I can help you, I have a little money. vs. I can't help you, I have too little money

Rappel: les indénombrables sont des noms qui ne peuvent pas être comptés et mis au pluriel (= invariables, pas de S) – Ex: water / rice / sand / juice / love / advice / information / furniture / money / time / research / etc.

Quantité moyenne à grande: some / several

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

SOME, traduisible par "quelques" peut s'utiliser avec un indénombrable ou un dénombrable – Ex: Can I have some rice please? / I have some band aids in my medicine cabinet.

(notez que SOME devient souvent ANY à l'interrogative et à la négative).

SEVERAL, qu'on traduit par "plusieurs", ne s'utilise qu'avec un dénombrable.

Ex: He has several friends in the neighborhood.

Autre quantifieurs utilisables: A CERTAIN NUMBER OF (+ den.) / A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF (+ inden) / etc...

Grande quantité: much / many / a lot of

MUCH s'utilise exclusivement avec un indénombrable, et MANY avec un dénombrable. – Ex: There are many possibilities if you want to practice basketball / I don't have much time.

A LOT OF... est pratique car il s'utilise avec les deux types de noms: I have a lot of money / She has a lot of friends.

Autres quantifieurs utilisables: PLENTY OF (+ den / inden) / A GREAT NUMBER OF (+ den.) / A LARGE AMOUNT or QUANTITY OF (+ inden.) / LOTS OF (+ den.) / A GREAT DEAL OF (+ den.) / etc.

Quantité totale ou nulle: all / each / every / no / not any

ALL (+ den. / inden.) permet de dénombrer un ensemble, tandis que EACH et EVERY (+ den.) insistent sur chaque élément (d'où la traduction par "chaque" et le fonctionnement avec le singulier). – Ex: It took me all night to fix the fridge. / All the students I know practice sports. / Every student I know goes to the gym once a week.

Pour exprimer une quantité nulle, on a soit NO (+ den. / inden.) dans une phrase affirmative, soit NOT ANY (+ den. / inden.) dans une phrase négative.

Ex: His university doesn't offer any sport activity on campus = His university offers no sport activity on campus.

Lexicon: useful words to talk about college athletics in the U.S.

A college/student athlete – a scholarship – tuition fees - college / university - classes = courses – a lecture – a lab – a degree = diploma – an undergraduate student – a graduate student - a campus – facilities / amenities - a stadium – a gym – a swimming pool – a climbing wall – tennis courts - an arena – a race track – a cheerleader – a training session – a coach – a varsity game – a match = a game – intercollegiate events – national / interstate events - recreational sports / leisure - a franchise – recruit – transfer – an alma mater – alumni (singular: an alumnus)

Crosswords

Complete this crossword puzzle by using words you have learned in the documents of this chapter.

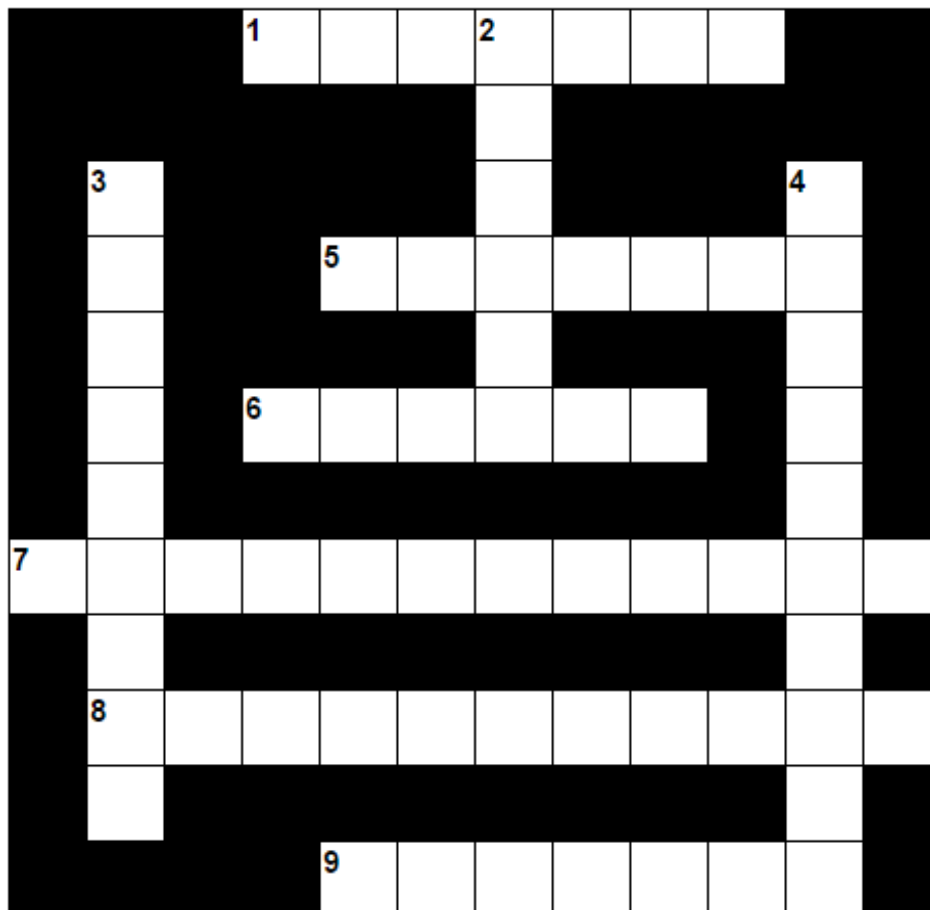
CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Across:

1. Name of the recreational system, as opposed to the elite NCAA system
5. Course involving a large group of students and a college professor who talks to his/her audience.
6. Synonym of diploma
7. Group of female athletes who sing and dance to encourage the team and entertain the crowd.
8. Money that is granted to students to help them finance their studies.
9. Synonym of homage

Down:

2. Name given to football in the US (and sport practiced by Jackson in text 3.b)
3. Name given to professional teams which compete in the NFL, NBA, NHL, MLB, MLS, etc.
4. Threaten something / put something in danger.



CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Exercice de vocabulaire: complétez ces phrases avec le quantifieur le plus approprié (voir liste ci-dessous).

Much – many – few – a few – little – a little – every – no

- There were so ... people in the stadium that I couldn't believe it was only a college game!
- If you do ... research, I'm sure you can find the solution to your problem.
- My mother wants me to visit ... college in the state before deciding which one I'll apply for.
- We only have ... time, so I doubt we'll make it to the soccer game before kick-off.
- I think ... basketball player will ever equal Michael Jordan
- Old Joe had ... friends, so I'm not surprised nobody attended his funeral.
- Don't worry, I can fix your bike, it will only take ... minutes.
- Wayne has had too ... coffee; that's why he's been really aggressive all day!

Appendix 2. Further reading

3.c. Cheerleaders: the athletes on the sidelines

Extracted from *The New York Times* - written by Jennifer Allen (February 20, 2004).

Last year, the University of Maryland became the first Division I N.C.A.A. institution to recognize competitive cheerleading as a varsity sport. That means team members are accorded the same benefits as other campus athletes -- a coaching and medical staff; locker rooms; help with academics.

Schools may treat cheerleaders as athletes -- but they don't have to. Some offer little more than a uniform and a game-day parking pass; others offer scholarships; none offer the full-range of support and benefit that Maryland does for competitive cheerleading. What's more, cheerleading is not even recognized by the N.C.A.A. as a sport.

Given the nature of competitive cheerleading, this seems like a risky proposition. Think about it: in what other sport is an athlete tossed more than 30 feet in the air -- smiling -- before spiraling down into the arms of a trusted teammate? Not surprisingly, cheerleading is the No. 1 cause of serious sports injuries to women (...).

3.d. President Obama Calls On NCAA To Rethink The Way It Protects Athletes

Extracted from *The Huffington Post* - written by Dave Jamieson (March 21, 2011).

Weighing in on the growing debate over amateurism in college sports, President Barack Obama said on Friday that universities bear "more responsibilities than right now they're showing" toward their athletes and that the NCAA should require schools to guarantee athletic scholarships with no strings attached.

The students need to be taken better care of because they are generating a lot of revenue here," Obama told *The Huffington Post* in a sit-down interview. "An immediate step that the NCAA could take — that some conferences have already taken — is if you offer a scholarship to a kid coming into school, that scholarship sticks, no matter what."

"I do think that recognizing that the majority of these student athletes are not going to end up playing professional ball — this isn't just a farm system for the NBA or the NFL — means that the universities have more responsibilities than right now they're showing," Obama said.

CHAP.3. Correction

1. Anticipation.

A lot of universities are famous mostly because their sports teams are very good.

In college basketball, the most respected teams are Villanova (a Philadelphia college which won the 2016 NCAA championship) Duke University (a North Carolina college which played 11 finals and won 5), Syracuse (in New York state), the University of Kentucky, etc.

In college football, the most feared squads are usually the University of Alabama (the "Crimson Tides" have won four national titles since 2009), Louisiana State (LSU), Florida State, etc.

Other big universities are also famous for their outstanding performances in most NCAA competitions and emphasize sport as one of their main values. These institutions include the University of North Carolina (UNC, Michael j Jordan's alma mater), Penn State and UCLA in California.

In these pictures, we can see a typical American campus built around an impressive football stadium – actually, US campuses generally revolve around a huge library or, if the college is really sport-oriented, around the football stadium.

We can also see basketball and football players competing in front of enormous crowds, like professional athletes. These crowds have nothing in common with the average attendance of university events in Europe, and prove how popular US college sports are.

We can also see two cheerleaders that support the UCLA football team and entertain the crowd. Cheerleaders are increasingly considered as athletes, and their presence during most games is indispensable to make the game a joyful event and, above all, all-American entertainment.

The last picture features a proud new graduating student who has completed his studies in an American college – it reminds us that beyond sports, US universities are often considered to be the best in the world (although they are also, by far, the most expensive!)

There are several major differences between sports in the US and sports in Europe. In the US, for instance, sport is more business-oriented: there are more sponsors, more commercials during the games, and there is probably more media

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

attention at all levels, including in high schools and colleges. In America, more than in Europe, sport is also considered to be a vehicle of social integration (in universities...). Finally, US athletes tend to be more obsessed with performance, as evidenced by their outstanding results during the Olympic games or world championships. But these are clichés, and the reality is often more complex. An ocean separates America and Europe, as we can see with soccer, a sport that Europeans are crazy about while most Americans only see it as an activity which is reserved for children and women.

2. Listening

Audio 2.a.

The short research assignment shows that although he never joined an NBA franchise, Trenton Meacham was a very respected player when he played in the NCAA championship, and he remains one of ASVEL's most valuable players.

Global comprehension: listen once and say whether these statements are true or false. (Justify when necessary)

- When he was a young boy, Trenton dreamed of becoming a professional basketball player. **True**
- When he was a student, Trenton only played for the University of Illinois. **False** (he played for Dayton university when he was a freshman / first year student)
- Trenton has never played for an NBA team. **True**
- Trenton has played in three European countries: Austria, Italy and France. **False** (He's played in Wels, Austria / Gottingen, Germany / Milan, Italy / Paris, Nanterre & Villeurbanne, France = 4 European countries)
- Between his experiences in Paris and Nanterre, Trenton considered retiring. **True** (but his break only lasted a few months).
- In Italy, Trenton played for the team owned by Silvio Berlusconi. **False** (Olimpia Milano was owned by Giorgio Armani)
- Trenton has been Pro A champion with two different teams. **True** (Nanterre & ASVEL)
- Trenton found it too hard to be a student athlete in a U.S. college. **False** (it was demanding but very exciting)

Detailed comprehension: listen again and answer these questions with full sentences, in your own words or by quoting the interview.

- What is the "red shirt" status in college basketball? Why did the NCAA create this status? Does Trenton seem to approve of this principle? Why?
=> It is a rule that prevents students from transferring schools every year and forces them to focus on their studies. "Red shirt" students can go to practice sessions but they can't play any games. Trenton doesn't sound convinced by this rule, since it doesn't stop student athletes from changing colleges.
- What were the two teams that Trenton supported when he was younger, and why?

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

=> Trenton was a big fan of the University of Illinois (the "Fighting Illini") because they played in his hometown of Champaign, IL. He also supported the Chicago Bulls because he lived two hours south of Chicago and attended games during the heyday of the Bulls (when Michael Jordan was playing).

- Give at least three reasons why Trenton found it so exciting to play basketball in college.

=> Trenton found it very exciting to play in front of huge crowds (16,000 to 20,000 spectators), with a lot of fans and lot of attention from the media, TV. He also enjoyed the pride that he felt playing for his college.

Listen carefully and complete these sentences from the interview.

- (0:25) "It was a dream OF MINE to continue playing as long AS I CAN."
- (4:49) "It can be difficult JUGGLING the demands of playing a sport (...) while still GETTING an education, which can be pretty DEMANDING as well."

Audio 2.b.

Global comprehension: listen once and say whether these statements are true or false. (Justify when necessary)

- J.D. Jackson attended a university in Vancouver, Canada. **True** (University of British Columbia)
- J.D. Jackson played in the NBA before going to Europe. **False**
- He spent most of his career in France. **True**
- College studies are as expensive in Canada as they are in the U.S. **False** (they're more expensive than in France but much cheaper than in the U.S.)
- J.D. says sports and education are intrinsically linked in the U.S. **True**
- Canada has a weak pro basketball league. **False** (they do not even have a professional league)
- All the Canadian student athletes who want to reach the elite try to go to American universities. **True**
- J.D. regrets not having the same school system in France as in Canada. **True**
- J.D.'s children don't practice any sports at all. **False** (they don't practice any sport in school but have activities on weekends and Wednesday afternoons)

Detailed comprehension: listen again and answer these questions with full sentences, in your own words or by quoting the interview.

- What does J.D. Jackson blame the French school system for? And what does he think should change?
=> J.D. Jackson blames the French educational system for laying too much emphasis on learning, at the expense of social interaction. He thinks school should end earlier in the afternoon, to leave time for social activities (art, clubs, sports...)
- Which adjective does J.D. Jackson use to express his opinion. Why?
=> He finds the French system "frustrating" because his French sons have never been excited about going to school.
- When he was a student in Canada, what did J.D. particularly appreciate on weekends?
=> He enjoyed going to school with his parents, being coached by his teachers and taking part in activities with his "buddies".

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Listen carefully and complete these sentences from the interview.

- (1:00) "It's similar, sort of HALFWAY between the experience in France and the experience in the U.S., that is TO SAY there's a lot of sports teams and high level play, but the PRIORITY is the education."
- (2:25) "It's like going to an American university but it's a little more LAID BACK and education-ORIENTED."
- (4:24) "I don't think it's AS FUN to go to school in France AS IT IS in North America."

3. Reading.

❖ Text 3.a.

Vocabulary.

Find the translations of these words in paragraphs 1 to 3 of text 3.a.:

Un loisir : leisure, *l'aviron* : rowing, *un diplôme* : a degree, *le programme (scolaire / universitaire)* : the curriculum, *la foule* : the crowd, *presque jamais* : hardly ever, *ambitionner* : to strive after, *former* : develop, *rarement* : seldom

Find the translations of these words in paragraphs 4 to 8:

Alimenter : feed, *abandonner ses études* : drop out (of school), *le propriétaire* : the owner, *juger bon de...* : see fit to (do sthg), *accueillir* : host, *opposer X à Y* : pit X against Y, *continuer de...* : keep (on) + V-ing, *ex/ancien(ne)* : former, *rendre hommage* : pay tribute (to sb).

Find the translations of these words in paragraphs 9 to 11:

Dernier cri : state-of-the-art, *les équipements* : facilities, *les frais de scolarité* : tuition fees, *une bourse* : a scholarship, *un prêt bancaire* : a loan, *les recettes (fiscales)* : revenue, *inabordable* : unaffordable, *une station de vacances* : a resort, *mettre l'accent sur...* : lay emphasis on (= emphasize), *au détriment de...* : at the expense of..., *méritant* : deserving, *défavorisé* : underprivileged.

Explain these words and expressions from text 3.a. in your own words:

To *debunk* a cliché or a myth is to expose how false or stupid it is, generally with rational arguments.

Many Americans have an *alma mater* : it corresponds to the college they attended when they were students.

A *shopping spree* is a short period of time when someone spends a lot of money and buys a lot of things.

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

A *burning issue* is a topic or question that people consider very important and about which people have strong opinions.

Comprehension questions.

True or false? Say whether the following statements are true or false and justify by quoting from the text :

- High-level sport competitions do not exist in French universities. **False**
"In France, many students practice recreational sports but very few take part in high-level competitions." (l.4-5)
- More professional athletes have college degrees in the US than in Europe. **True** (see l.15-16 & 22-23)
- In the US, college sport is not as popular as professional sport. **False**
" in 2015, almost 30 million U.S. TV viewers watched the "March Madness" basketball finals that pitted Duke against Wisconsin – more than the NBA finals!" (l.37-39)
- Institutions like Harvard don't have great sport teams because they don't have enough money. **False**
"Not all U.S. colleges have highly competitive teams - some, like Harvard and Yale, do not give priority to their sport results, and compete in minor divisions." (l.45-46)
- Studying in the U.S. can be very expensive. **True**
"With yearly tuition fees ranging from about \$10,000 to more than \$50,000, student athletes must often rely on scholarships and loans." (l.54-56)
- All American universities make a lot of money thanks to sports. **False**
" only a few colleges produce substantial revenue from sport programs" (l. 58-59)
- Some people think sport should not play such an important role in US colleges. **True**
"Some colleges are blamed for laying too much emphasis on sports, at the expense of academic fields like art and sciences." (l. 62-64)

Answer the following questions in your own words :

- In your opinion, why do so few French students practice sports on campus?
Historically, French campuses have almost never been linked with athletics, and there are very few facilities and sport activities offered by French colleges. Traditionally, the students who want to practice sport (be it recreationally or at a high level) go to clubs.
- Focus on the third paragraph: in your opinion, why does the recruitment of young athletes in Europe raise "ethical questions"?

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

Just like the American system could be criticized for making money out of students, European clubs can be criticized because they try to attract very young athletes, sometimes by giving sums of money and forcing the parents to accept. This system is unethical because children should not be the object of commercial deals and their education, not their career, should be their priority.

- Why are a lot of Americans more inclined to support college teams than professional franchises?

A lot of Americans feel closer to their local college teams than to professional franchises for two main reasons. First because in a lot of states and cities, there is no NFL, NBA or NHL team whatsoever, and the only team you can support is the local college competing in the NCAA. Secondly because even if there is a franchise playing next to you, it's mainly a business, and the team might very well be relocated and move to another city.

- Why is it so crucial for some colleges to have very competitive sport teams?

The less prestigious colleges need the publicity of NCAA games to attract students. Few people would know the University of Alabama if they didn't have such a good football team. NCAA games are also a way to make money.

- Why do you think the status of student athletes is envied by other students? Student athletes are often very popular (especially with girls) and enjoy privileges like the right to choose their rooms and courses before everyone. Most importantly, they are granted huge scholarships that allow them to study without working or borrowing money from the bank.

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

❖ Text 3.b.

Vocabulary

Find the translations of the following words in text 3.b.:

Un malentendu : a misconception, *une charge de travail* : a load, *un TP* : a lab, *un cours magistral* : a lecture, *mettre en péril* : jeopardize, *une bourse* : a scholarship, *la fierté* : pride, *ça vaut le coup* : it's worth it

Find the synonyms of the following words in text 4.b.:

A cliché : a stereotype, *very excited* : thrilled, *many* : numerous, *happen* : occur, *difficult (x2)* : hard / challenging, *a team* : a squad

Comprehension questions

True or false? Say whether the following statements are true or false and justify by quoting from the text :

- Jackson wrote this article when he was a third-year college student. **False**
"As I enter my senior year" (l.2)
- He wrote this article to defend his status as a student athlete. **True**
"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to clear up some of the misconceptions and share the experience." (l.2-3)
- The academic curriculum of student athletes is smaller than that of other students. **False**
"A student soccer player spends 40-50 hours a week on soccer and soccer related activities. For most people, that's a full-time job. For college athletes, it's in addition to their course load." (l.3-6)
- Studying as a college athlete can be a lonely experience. **True**
"There's no professor or TA present to ask questions or review a difficult chapter; there's just you and your textbook." (l.12-14)
- Jackson regrets having chosen to be a student athlete. **False**
"Being a college athlete isn't easy, but for me, it's worth it." (l.21)

Answer the following questions in your own words :

- In your opinion, what are the "stereotypes" and "misconceptions" about student athletes mentioned by Jackson in his introduction? (you may use expressions of reproach like "blame" or "accuse").

Student athletes are generally blamed for being lazy and working less than other students, because the college faculty is more lenient with them. They

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

are also criticized for taking advantage of the system and joining good colleges while their academic level would normally not allow them to go to college. Besides, they're reproached with receiving scholarships that should go to students who are excellent academically, not just on the field. Finally, some college athletes are accused of cheating in exams and sometimes of not even going to class.

- Guess why Jackson spends so much time in planes, buses and hotels.

Jackson plays soccer for his college, so he must often take part in away games in other states. The U.S.A. is a very large country, so visiting other campuses takes a lot of time and forces you to miss a lot of classes.

- Why are studies so much harder for college athletes? (min. 50 words)
College life is harder for college athletes because they have to spend a lot of time on the field and in treatment. What's more, they often miss courses when they are away, traveling by bus or by train with their teams. So they need to work even more than others to compensate for their absences and catch up with their fellow students.
- Reformulate the two consequences faced by student athletes who don't succeed academically. (Try to start your argument with the expression "not only... but also")

Not only can they be excluded / removed from their teams, but they can also lose their scholarships. Since most of them can't pay the very expensive tuition fees, that means they might have to drop out of school. In other words, there is a lot of pressure on their shoulders.

4. Grammar.

Among the following 6 sentences, 5 contain a mistake: spot these mistakes and correct them.

- Everybody agrees that Harvard is as prestigious AS Yale.
- Kathrin told me that livING in Paris was her lifetime dream.
- The football team of the University of Nebraska is not as impressive as it used to be.OK
- The University of Arizona has been harshly criticizED for spending too much money on sport facilities.
- John F. Kennedy WAS assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald on November 22, 1963, in Dallas.

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

- Football games last ~~more~~ longer than basketball games.

Put these active sentences in the passive voice, adding the agent only if it is necessary.

- The best universities usually recruit the NCAA's most valuable players. => The NCAA's most valuable players are usually recruited by the best universities.
- The police arrested the suspect last night .=> The suspect was arrested last night. (qui d'autre que la police pourrait appréhender un suspect?)
- Colleges spend millions of dollars to have the best facilities. => Millions of dollars are spent by colleges to have the best facilities.
- Do you think colleges should pay student athletes? => Do you think student athletes should be paid (by colleges – facultative car cela va de soi)
- A player has tackled Jason Smith violently, leading the referee to stop the game for a few seconds. => Jason has been tackled violently (agent inconnu, donc non mentionné)
- Some people estimate that NCAA football is not inferior to the NFL. => It is estimated that NCAA football... (pas de complément d'agent car "some people" est trop vide de sens).

5. Translation.

Translate the following sentences into French:

- o Text 3.a. lines 40-44: Many players that make it to the professional level keep supporting the college team they used to play for. For example basketball superstar Michael Jordan remains a faithful supporter of his former college, and he is said to have worn his North Carolina shorts underneath his Chicago Bulls outfit throughout his career, for good luck and to pay tribute to his alma mater.
Beaucoup de joueurs qui parviennent à atteindre le niveau professionnel continuent de soutenir l'université pour laquelle ils jouaient. Par exemple, la grande star du basketball Michael Jordan reste un supporter fidèle de son ancienne université, et il se dit que pendant toute sa carrière, il a porté son short de l'université de Caroline du Nord, par superstition et pour lui rendre hommage.

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

- Text 3.b. lines 18-21: If it's so hard, why do it? Although scholarship money helps me pay for school, that was not why I chose to be a student athlete. For me, it has always been primarily about the pride I feel when I run onto the field representing my school. Being a college athlete isn't easy, but for me, it's worth it.
Si c'est si dur, alors pourquoi est-ce que je le fais? Bien que l'argent de la bourse m'aide à payer mes études, ce n'est pas la raison principale pour laquelle j'ai choisi ce statut d'étudiant sportif. Pour moi, l'essentiel a toujours été la fierté que je ressens lorsque je pénètre sur le terrain en courant pour représenter mon école. Ce n'est pas facile d'être un étudiant sportif, mais pour moi, cela vaut le coup.

7. Writing:

Pros & cons of being a student athlete in an American college. (Try to use "on the one hand... on the other hand...")

Pros: nice campus – great academic level – being popular on campus and representing your college in front of many fans - opportunity to speak English and improve your linguistic skills – opportunity to play at a very high level – opportunity to live the American experience and make new friends

Cons: very expensive if you don't have a scholarship – very difficult to be both a full-time student and a full-time athlete – not pleasant to be envied and criticized by other students – a lot of traveling– not enough time to take advantage of all that a US campus has to offer – you are far from your home and miss your family

The same arguments can be used

Vocab exercises:

Crosswords:

Across: 1. Varsity / 5. Lecture / 6. Degree / 7. Cheerleaders / 8. Scholarship / 9. Tribute

Down: 2. Soccer / 3. Franchise / 4. jeopardize

Vocab exercise: Complète ces phrases avec le bon quantifieur.

- There were so MANY people in the stadium that I couldn't believe it was only a college game!

CHAP. 3 : COLLEGE ATHLETICS IN THE U.S.

- If you do A LITTLE research, I'm sure you can find the solution to your problem.
- My mother wants me to visit EVERY college in the state before deciding which one I'll apply for.
- We only have LITTLE time, so I doubt we'll make it to the soccer game before kick-off.
- I think NO basketball player will ever equal Michael Jordan.
- Old Joe had FEW friends, so I'm not surprised nobody attended his funeral.
- Don't worry, I can fix your bike, it will only take A FEW minutes.
- Wayne has had too MUCH coffee; that's why he's been really aggressive all day!