Anybody that has tuned into ESPN any given Saturday night knows UCLA quarterback Josh Rosen: once a top recruit and now a top NFL prospect. Rosen recently came under fire for his comments about being a student-athlete. In an interview with Bleacher Report, he was asked about the challenge of juggling class and football. He responded, “Football and school don't go together. They just don't. Trying to do both is like trying to do two full-time jobs...Human beings don't belong in school with our schedules. No one in their right mind should have a football player's schedule, and go to school.” This is not just true for football players; this is true for all Division I student-athletes.

Rosen was talking about his schedule during the season, the off-season schedule is a "job" in itself. The life of an off-season baseball player is no walk in the park. Caleb Baalgard is a freshman utility player from Michigan majoring in Sports Marketing and Management. He's played baseball his entire life and aspires to be a professional baseball player. Baalgard is now in an elite group of athletes gifted enough to be recruited to and play in a Division I program. He must adhere to a regiment that collides two opposing worlds, baseball and school.

A typical day begins by waking up at 4:30 AM and going to a 6 AM weight lift. Afterwards, Baalgard must shower, get breakfast, and head to class. He will be in class from 8:00 to 11:00 AM. Once class ends, it is a rush to TT’s, the athlete only cafeteria, to get lunch before needing to be at practice at 12:30. Practice runs until about 5:30 or longer depending on if there is an intrasquad scrimmage. Next, Balgaard gets about an hour and a half to find dinner before going to the academic center for mandated study tables from 7:00-9:00 PM. However, Caleb and his teammates stay for longer, usually until about 10:00 PM. He must attend at least 8 hours of study tables every week. Caleb tends to total 12 hours/week. By this time, Balgaard can finally relax, but the relaxation time isn’t long. The cycle starts all over again the next day.

Being a student-athlete is a tremendous experience that very few people have. It takes hard work and dedication to just make it to the Division I level. According to head coach Chris Lemonis, it is hard to get to this level but harder to stay at that level. When asked about the most difficult part about being a student-athlete, Baalgard said, “[It’s] not having the time to do leisure activities that you would like to do.” With a packed schedule starting before the sun rises, the time for relaxation is dwindled only to about an hour before needing sleep to regenerate for another day. This current schedule is difficult enough in the off-season. A student-athlete’s schedule during the season is a whole different beast.

While this schedule can be grueling, Baalgard and his teammates would not trade it for a regular student’s schedule. They’ve worked tirelessly to make it to this point in their playing careers. Many dream of making it into professional baseball and will work every day to fulfill their dreams. Having busy days is part of being a student-athlete. They sacrifice their sleep and personal time to become the best and to dogpile after winning the College World Series.
**Personal Reflection**

I think my photo story came out very well. I got interesting photos that showed how difficult the life of an athlete is. My goal was to tell the story of how there is more than meets the eye when it came to a student athlete’s life. Most people assume it is class, practice, and games. Many don’t think about the off-season. The off-season is where most of the work and grinding takes place, and I needed to show that.

In terms of photos, I think I used many of the elements well. For action shots, I wanted to include blurred and frozen action. I think both of those shots came out very well. The blurring of him batting was a difficult photo to capture because my goal was to have Caleb be the only blurred object whilst still showing what was going on. I had to tinker with both the aperture and shutter speed very precisely in order for it to work out the way I’d hoped.

Another shot that was difficult to capture was the early wake up photo. Because it was so dark, I had to mess with the aperture a lot. I needed to balance being able to see the numbers on the clock with needing to see his face clear enough. It helped that Caleb was very still when I was taking this photo because I knew that any movement would blur him and ruin the photograph. It was also difficult having to silently navigate his pitch black dorm room with a $1500 camera and tripod without him noticing. Luckily, a tired college student focused on his phone is not very aware of his surroundings.

I am also very happy with the way the studying photos came out. I was able to capture his focus on the assignment without distracting him. It is incredibly awkward taking pictures of people studying.

The most difficult part of this assignment was access. There were many photos I wish I could have taken of him in the field or hitting, but the limited zoom of the camera hindered that
ability. In addition, I did not have access to the study tables. There would have been no issue getting in; I just felt like I would have been a distraction to him and his teammates. Luckily, Caleb was willing to let me come to his dorm to get the photos I would have gotten in study tables. This problem also came up for taking photos of him in class. Taking pictures would have been a major distraction to him, the other students, and the professor. The last difficulty was weight room photos. Most people don’t like their photos taken at 8 AM, and nobody likes it at 6 AM when they’re sweaty and working out. However, a photo of him up as early as 4:30 AM was able to show that something happens that early in the morning.

The biggest struggle of the whole project was finding ways to take different types of photos. There is only a limited number of baseball related photos, I can capture: fielding, hitting, running, throwing. I needed to have a couple of one of those so that I could show the practice prior to the scrimmage. I needed variety in effects I could have on the action. The blurred hitting shot solved that issue.

In general, I think this project was a success. I got (what I think are) interesting photographs. I, also, told a story that not many people have the ability to know about: off-season sports. All a casual fan sees is the season, not many see what happens when there are no games, the cameras aren’t rolling, and the athletes are not on the field.