

Standout student-athlete balances basketball, chemistry

As a chemistry major at Dominican and a star on its men's basketball team, Matt Hayes '16 believes in the power of teamwork.

"In chemistry we work in groups and learn how to do lab projects together. There is definitely a team effort on both sides," the 6-foot-2, 200-pound senior co-captain says. "At Dominican, I've learned the importance of teamwork, communication and how to represent yourself in a positive manner."

Matt has represented Dominican extraordinarily. In basketball, he is a three-time member of the [Pacific West Conference All-Academic team](#) who has twice been named [PacWest Player of the Week](#) for his play on the court. Last year he was named [CoSIDA Capital One NCAA Division II Academic All-District first team](#). He has helped Dominican win the [PacWest's Academic Achievement Award](#) an unprecedented six times.

Matt and the Penguins are returning from a three-game road trip in Hawaii where he became the all-time leading scorer in Dominican's NCAA Division II era with a 15-point effort in a victory over BYU-Hawaii on January 16. Last month he scored his [1,000th point for the Penguins](#) in his four-year career in a 102-92 win over Fresno Pacific. It came a week after he tallied a career-high 30 points in victory at Montana State University in Billings.

Academically, Matt is eyeing medical school. He had a rare opportunity as a sophomore to earn selection into [Kaiser Permanente's Scholars and Mentors Program](#). That allowed him to shadow doctors and observe their interactions with patients and inspired him to pursue a career in medicine.

Along the way, Matt has been impressed by the support he has received from his professors in the [School of Health and Natural Sciences](#), whether for his work in the classroom or his play on the basketball court.

"I've shared a lot of experiences I would not have shared at a bigger school, especially with the teachers," he says.

After graduation in May, Matt will study for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). He is interested in sports medicine and aims to be a physician or a physician's assistant, which he learned is a growing and competitive field.

When Matt was recruited by [Dominican athletics](#) to play basketball as a freshman, he was prolific in science and math. An Organismal biology class fueled his desire to major in [chemistry](#) and an Organic Chemistry class challenged him as a sophomore.

"It strengthened my focus," he says.

It also was during his sophomore year that Matt made a crucial game-clinching three-point shot in a big upset win on the road over nationally-ranked Dixie State. It propelled the Penguins to an 11-game winning streak and quieted a rowdy crowd in Utah.

"I'll never forget the sound of silence in that arena. I loved it," Matt says.

Matt also will never forget the sound he made when he learned he had earned an 'A' in Biochemistry as a junior. It was a testament to how hard he studies as a student-athlete, which is a reflection of how competitive he is in basketball. Matt has historically led the team with the fastest time in a pre-season conditioning one-mile run, a product of off-season training. He credits his parents, particularly his father, Tim, for instilling the work ethic and mantra to be the best at whatever Matt does.

That extra effort and attitude has helped become the greatest scorer in Dominican history since the

University elevated into NCAA Division II in 2009.

“It’s pretty cool,” he says. “I’m not too concerned about individual statistics, but this is a definitely a reflection of good teammates who like sharing the ball. They helped get me the ball in the right spots.”

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