

ANNUAL REPORT 2020





There's no doubt "2020" will go down in the books as one of the most challenging years in modern history. The pandemic brought athletics to a halt in ways none of us had ever imagined. This long-term season of loss, uncertainty, and chronic stress has taken its toll on athletes everywhere. For many, sports has been their main coping mechanism for handling the difficulties of life. Without the ability to fall back on their sport as usual, the stresses of pandemic-life have been especially hard-felt for student-athletes. March 2020 marks the date when *all* student-athletes were abruptly cut off from their sports and when *all* student-athletes got a taste of what it would be like to be one of *our athletes*.

For the past four years, Sidelined USA has served and resourced athletes who have experienced a medically-forced exit from sport. This is our space and we know the psychological impact all too well. The grief, the loss, the isolation, the strain on identity, the depression, the anxiety about the future . . . these are the recurring themes of athletes who are blocked off from their goals and dreams through circumstances outside their control. While it is true that for most pandemic-sidelined athletes the loss is temporary, the struggles are still real and we felt compelled to mobilize during this unprecedented season to provide guidance and resources to help all sidelined student-athletes to face their adversity, build resilience, and forge forward even stronger.

Therefore this year, with your help, we stepped up to provide specialized programming for *both* medically-sidelined athletes *as well as* pandemic-sidelined athletes. By engaging sidelined athletes with pro-active mental wellness support, we empower them with the tools to overcome their challenges both on and off the field/court.

It is a great privilege to be serving this exponentially larger community of sidelined athletes and together, with your continued support, we will reunite them with their passions and inspire them to find a meaningful way forward.

Christine Pinalto / Executive Director



ALISSA BOYHTARI
SIDELINED ATHLETE / SIDELINED USA MENTOR

“ *With Sidelined USA, sidelined athletes can find a space where they don't feel alone, where they feel worth, and where they're reminded that identity isn't found in their athletic achievements, nor their injury.*

ABOUT SIDELINED USA



MISSION

To reunite permanently-sidelined student-athletes with their passions and inspire them to find a meaningful way forward



VISION

To see athletes create a positive mindset within themselves, requiring their personal best, in order to confidently face and overcome their challenges, both on and off the field/court



PURPOSE

To make specialized support resources available to all sidelined student-athletes nationwide at no cost and to elevate the standard of care for medically disqualified athletes through research, education, and advocacy.

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2020 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Tremendous USER GROWTH

UNIQUE VISITORS	17,497	148% GROWTH
UNIQUE VISITS	14,928	147% GROWTH
# OF TIMES RESOURCES ACCESSED	16,995	174% GROWTH

**CREATION &
LAUNCH OF:**



**NEW RESOURCES
CREATED:
21**

287

Provided resources to 287
sidelined athletes and their
parents referred through
NCSA - Next College
Student Athlete



**=NEW=
PODCAST
LAUNCH**

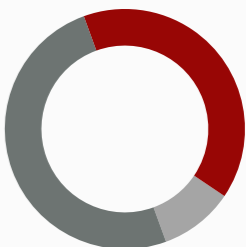
CREATION of

REFERRING PARTNERS PROGRAM

- NCSA, NEXT COLLEGE STUDENT ATHLETE
- PARENT HEART WATCH
- CODY STEPHENS FOUNDATION
- ANTHONY BATES FOUNDATION
- ERIC PARADES SAVE A LIFE FOUNDATION

WEBSITE USERSHIP:

- 50% MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS
- 40% ATHLETES
- 10% PARENTS



EARNED



**GUIDESTAR
SEAL OF
TRANSPARENCY**

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS



51% GROWTH



52% GROWTH



10% GROWTH

COVID- RESPONSE

2020-2021



As an extension of our everyday mission, the Sidelined USA team mobilized to launch the COVID Wellness Initiative this Fall, a program designed to support and resource student-athletes forced to the sidelines due to the pandemic.

★ THE PURPOSE

TO PROVIDE FREE SPECIALIZED RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL WELLNESS OF STUDENT-ATHLETES THROUGH THIS SEASON OF PANDEMIC-RELATED IMPACT ON LIFE & SPORT

★ THE NEED

Due to the pandemic:

- **68%** of high school athletes report feelings of anxiety & depression at levels that would typically require medical intervention (*UW Madison*)
- **66%** of DIII student-athletes report feeling stressed (*Rowan Univ.*)
- The rates of reported mental health concerns amongst NCAA student-athletes are **150% - 250% higher** than have been historically reported (*NCAA*)
- **1 in 12** NCAA athletes report feeling so depressed it has been difficult to function (*NCAA*)
- 1 in 4 people **aged 18-24** have considered suicide during the pandemic (*CDC*)

And athletes KNOW they need help!

- **85%** reported desiring access to **mental health resources** in response to coping with the pandemic's restrictions on sports (*NCAA*)
- Pandemic-impacted student-athletes would like assistance in enhancing overall **well-being, stress management skills** and **coping skills** to help deal with anxiety (*Rowan Univ.*)

★ UNIQUELY QUALIFIED

This is familiar space for us. Sidelined USA has always supported athletes experiencing a forced exit from sport, though the exit is for medical reasons and is usually permanent. Student-athletes forced to the sidelines due to the pandemic confront a similar psychological manifestation of loss and uncertainty.

As the first and only national 501(c)3 nonprofit addressing the psychological impact of a medically-forced exit from sport, we are uniquely qualified to provide insights in this domain.

★ THE PROGRAM

Our program goal is to help athletic programs be prepared to meet the rising need for supportive information and resources that address the psychological framework of this unprecedented situation. With free specialized resources published monthly through the academic year, participating partners are better equipped to provide student-athletes access to the support they need.

Our network of sports psychologists, mental health experts, and content experts share specific tools and discuss practical strategies to help athletes cope and thrive during this especially challenging season. Utilizing our network of mentor athletes, who previously experienced a medically-forced exit from sport, we are able to build rapport and connect with the audience of pandemic-sidelined athletes. Sidelined's mentor athletes provide unique insights into the internal dialogues of athletes forced to the sidelines, offer advice based on their personal experience, and share about their own mental health journeys as well.

POSITIONED TO LEAD

★ THE RESOURCES

- WEBINARS & PODCASTS
- INTERVIEWS & PANEL DISCUSSIONS
- DISCUSSION GUIDES
- RESOURCE PAGES

★ FEATURING *our network of:*

- MDQ-ED "MENTOR" ATHLETES
- SPORTS PSYCHOLOGISTS
- MENTAL PERFORMANCE COACHES
- MENTAL HEALTH EXPERTS
- CONTENT EXPERTS

2020 RESOURCE THEMES

Coping with Loss, Loneliness, & Chronic Stress

Managing Negative & Self-Defeating Thoughts

Depression & Anxiety

When the Pandemic Ends Your Athletic Career

The Holidays, Triggers, & Mental Health

"After finding the COVID Wellness Initiative on Sidelined USA's website, I decided to reach out to my teammates to see if there were any shared emotions. I was quick to find I was not alone, and we decided to meet on our own every couple of weeks to discuss the Team Sidelined Podcast. The connections and deep bonding that has happened through these meetings is beyond moving. Vulnerability continues to encourage vulnerability, empowering one another to share our individual struggles and talk about



things that don't get brought up in daily conversation. Listening to the advice, coping skills, and resources shared during the podcast episodes has completely changed my mindset regarding the situation I am in. The message on Team Sidelined's podcast is just what every athlete needs right now. I am so appreciative of the message they share and the light they bring to the mental game."

EMMA LAWRENCE

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT AND STUDENT LIAISON
UNIV. OF WISCONSIN LA CROSSE

"Sidelined's COVID Wellness Initiative has helped me grow in my understanding of the mental battle so many of the athletes I care and work with are facing on a daily basis. With the content given I have a more holistic opportunity to care for the spiritual, physical, and mental needs of the athletes I work with."



LAUREN ROBERGE

ATHLETES IN ACTION, CHICAGO



"We continue to talk about how mental health is just as important as physical health, and now these student athletes have these resources at their fingertips to help them work through any issues that the pandemic may have caused for them."

GREG GAROFALO, ATC

HEAD ATHLETIC TRAINER
HOFFMAN ESTATES H.S., IL

MEANINGFUL SUPPORT

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

9 TRAININGS/CONFERENCES

- Parent Heart Watch - Conference Speaker: *"Adapting and Thriving After Diagnosis"*
- Northwestern University Annual Performance Summit - Speaker: *"Improved Patient Care for Permanently-Sidelined Athletes"*
- Northwestern Medicine Sports Medicine Conference: *"Improved Patient Care for Permanently-Sidelined Athletes"*
- NATA webinar: *"Insights for ATs When Athletics are Sidelined by a Pandemic"*
- Northshore Fellows: Presentation on Sidelined USA
- NATA 2020 Symposium - Virtual/Live Booth
- Southwestern Conference Athletic Trainers group - Guest: *"Competing with the Challenges of COVID-19, Mental Health"*
- Sports Philanthropy Network World Congress - Panelist: *"Athlete Mental Health"*
- Hughston Clinic, Orthopaedics Seminar - Guest: *"Concussions in Athletes/Mental Health Awareness"*



ORIGINAL RESEARCH

SIDELINED ATHLETE RESEARCH SURVEY

the athlete experience with medically forced exit from sport—

1. **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT**
2. **DEPRESSION**
3. **SUICIDAL IDEATION**
4. **DRUG/ALCOHOL ABUSE**
5. **CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING MEDICAL EXIT**
6. **SUPPORT OFFERED BY ATHLETIC PROGRAMS**
7. **SATISFACTION LEVELS OF SUPPORT OFFERED**

Under the supervision of:



Justin Stanek
Athletic Training Program Director



CURRENT STATUS as of 10/15/2020:

Actively seeking additional participants, 59 completed surveys to date

Goal is 100+ participants, providing a sample set 5-10x larger than available studies*

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:

Specifically related to their medically-forced exit from sport:

- **90% of participants reported experiencing IDENTITY LOSS**
- **81% experienced DEPRESSION**
- **34% experienced SUICIDAL THOUGHTS**
- **7% created a SUICIDE PLAN**
- **17% abused or used DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL to cope**

* Available research on psychological impact of medical exit from sport is typically 7-18 subjects.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



JACKIE MERCER-ALLIBONE

SIDELINED USA DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT

When I used to think of the word “sidelined” I would immediately be brought to a state of heartbreak - it was a label, a burden, and a stigma that I never wanted to succumb to. I associated the word with the most formative time in my life when I re-evaluated my identity and questioned so much. I also connected the word personally to isolation and self-deprecation. Perhaps if I were aware that what I was going through at the time I became a sidelined athlete was normal, I would have been more forgiving of myself and processed emotions constructively.

Looking back, being an athlete was the one thing that I KNEW I was good at. Being an athlete boosted my confidence in everything else in my life. I did better in school, made friends through my teammates, and felt like I belonged to something. As I grew older my dreams scaled to wanting to be a Division I student-athlete. I was driven and determined.

In college, I came in as a freshman starting every game on the lacrosse team for Temple University. I was on the President’s Honor Roll and enjoying my time at the university. My difficult road began the following year when I suffered an ACL tear. It was a roller coaster ride of emotions that I was not prepared to navigate - denial, anger, depression, identity loss, isolation. I was doing terrible in school as a result of my lack of motivation. Mentally I was destroyed and knew I felt awful, but couldn’t understand why or how to get out of that state.

I didn’t process the injury in a healthy way and when I returned to play the following year I struggled even more mentally. I set my expectations high upon return. In my eyes, I was not the player I once was. I dove deeper and deeper into depression. I placed a stigma on myself and while doing so, I internalized and became more isolated from my teammates, my friends and family. People knew something was different, and I wasn’t happy anymore. Frankly, they

were disappointed in me and my new personality. I felt that I had no one. I thought about ending it all.

Four games into my fifth year season I tore my ACL and buckled my meniscus. My athletic career was officially over. Outwardly, I was told I handled my injury gracefully. My teammates were devastated, my coach felt remorse, and my parents felt horrible for me. I, however, told myself that I couldn’t repeat what happened last time. I told myself that I wouldn’t grieve. I blocked off my emotions. I repeated to myself “it’s not about me, it’s not about me” over and over again to avoid any criticism that I was “feeling sorry for myself”. I smiled on the outside but was destroyed on the inside. It was just the beginning of my journey with mental health.

It took me ten years to finally seek therapy and prioritize myself. It took me ten years to completely understand why my injuries affected me so much. It took me TEN YEARS. I was diagnosed with chronic depression, PTSD, and anxiety. Contrary to what most may believe, this was actually a relief for me because I finally had answers as to why I felt the way I did for so long. I finally could start fighting. Through a lot of therapy, open dialogue, and healthy coping mechanisms I found myself again. I found self love and knew I was more than an athlete.

The word “sidelined” has taken on a different meaning for me. I associate being sidelined with strength, vulnerability, and resilience. My experience as a sidelined athlete and the aftermath of it all made me a stronger human being. It also equipped me with the skills to help others who may be going through the same thing. Through an online search, I discovered Sidelined USA and knew I had to get involved. I wanted to find the silver lining in my experience and Sidelined USA offered me that full circle journey.

Sidelined USA recognizes that each student-athlete has a story. Each of us is unique, with our own backgrounds and reasons why we may approach medical disqualification differently. I get to help Sidelined USA spread this message and share resources to those who are struggling. The existence alone of Sidelined USA is so important for athletes to know they are not alone. There is a community of people who “get it” and who can help each other. I remember the first time I looked through all of the resources on Sidelined USA’s website and thought “I wish this was around when I was going through my injuries”. I felt seen and heard.

Volunteering for this organization is a dream come true. It adds a meaning to so much. I want to help athletes know that they have the right to grieve and that they will come out on the other side stronger. I am so passionate about the mission of Sidelined and helping student-athletes see their purpose beyond the game. We don’t have to forget about being an athlete, we just have to learn how to be a whole human with or without sport. I want to help Sidelined reach as many people as possible and raise awareness. It is my dream that we continue to help athletes process being sidelined in the most healthy way possible so they can move forward and not struggle. There is such a need for this and so much left for the athletic world to learn. I am so excited to be a part of something and belong to a community of sidelined warriors. I have found my meaningful way forward through Sidelined USA.

2021 PROGRAM INSIGHTS



COVID WELLNESS INITIATIVE

JANUARY - JUNE

Sidelined USA will continue to create and provide monthly resources to help COVID-impacted student-athletes:

- Learn proven strategies to cope with loss, uncertainty, and chronic stress
- Build mental vigilance
- Increase mental health awareness
- Harness their athletic mindset to conquer adversity outside of athletic performance

2021 RESOURCE THEMES

Depression: Seeking Help or Concerned for a Teammate

Cultivating Resilience in the Face of Adversity

Suicidal Ideation / Concerned for a Teammate

Beyond an Athlete: Creating a Healthy Identity

Beyond Athletics: Retaining the Competitive Spirit for Life



PROGRAM

LAUNCHING
FALL 2021

**CREATING A PERSONAL CONNECTION
AND WORKING RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SIDELINED USA AND
ATHLETIC PROGRAMS UTILIZING OUR
FREE RESOURCES TO HELP SUPPORT
THEIR PERMANENTLY-SIDELINED
ATHLETES**

The Sidelined USA Campus Liaison Program will partner with athletic programs to provide meaningful support to permanently-sidelined athletes and help them make a healthy transition to their next phase of life. The program will provide free specialized support resources and training for campus athletic training departments to extend meaningful support to their medically disqualified athletes. The goal of the Campus Liaison Program is to create long-lasting partnerships with high school and collegiate athletic programs to improve the standard of care for sidelined student-athletes in their transition following medical exit. By partnering with athletic programs, the Campus Liaison program leverages the power of existing personal relationships combined with our research-based, first-of-their-kind resources, to provide meaningful support to athletes in crisis.

Sidelined USA will train the athletic trainers at each participating campus to understand the free support resources available through our program, as well as teach them about best practices in the after-care of medically disqualified athletes. The strategy is to create a protocol for establishing an individualized athlete support plan including periodic check-ins at different post-crisis milestones. This “team approach” ensures that the athlete feels cared for and always has access to the specialized information and resources that will help them move forward in their transition following medical exit.

If you are interested in learning more, please email contact@SIDELINEDUSA.org.

2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

BALANCE SHEET

Assets	
Bank Accounts	\$57,288
Liabilities	
Liabilities - Loan Payable*	\$10,445
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
	\$57,288

* PPP Loan, expected to be forgiven in full in 2021

REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Revenue	
Individual Contributions	\$13,832
Foundations	\$10,000
Corporations	\$75,788
TOTAL REVENUE	
	\$99,620

Revenue by Quarter

<u>Qu. 1</u>	<u>Qu. 2</u>	<u>Qu. 3</u>	<u>Qu. 4</u>
\$2,900	\$5,714	\$21,300	\$69,706

Expenses	
Program Services	\$53,157
General Operations	\$11,562
Fundraising	\$11,671
TOTAL EXPENSES	
	\$76,390

Reflects finances January 1- December 31, 2020

SPECIAL THANKS

FOUNDING STRATEGIC SPONSOR



ELITE SPONSOR



Top Volunteer Fundraisers

Mire Kashikura	Garrett Ponder
Jordan Anderson	Jackie Allibone
Paul Rupp	Kris Maday
Carrie Jaworski	Cade Pinalto
Sherry Purdue	Katie Hamilton
Val Jones	Alyssa Gaidar

**OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE
TO ALL OF OUR
SUPPORTERS AND DONORS
WHO MAKE THIS WORK POSSIBLE.**

If you would like to support our mission, please visit:
www.SIDELINEDUSA.org/donate



A MEANINGFUL WAY FORWARD

www.SIDELINEDUSA.org

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