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MARSHALL—Spare time is a relative term for East Texas Baptist University senior Lia Frederick.

For the last two years, Frederick—a member of Calvary Baptist Church in West Orange who attends Central Baptist Church of Marshall during the school year—has participated in both the Lady Tiger cross-country and soccer teams. On the course, she has consistently been one of ETBU's top two runners. And on the soccer field, she's been a starter since about midway through the 2006 season.

Lia Frederick and her alter-ego Toby.

But when Frederick looks at her calendar, her role as a double-sport athlete takes second place to her duties as ETBU's mascot, Toby the Tiger.

On a particularly hectic Saturday in the fall, Frederick may wake up early, run a cross-country meet in the morning, hustle back to Ornelas Stadium to assume her role as Toby on the football sidelines, then head over to Cornish Field for a grueling nighttime soccer match. She calls those experiences her "triathlon" weekends.

"The next day is always a drag. … I call the day after I mascot football games 'mascot hangover,'" she said. Symptoms usually include a migraine and a sore jaw from Toby's head strap.

"Sundays are always a test of discipline for me, but it's more of a spiritual discipline test. Even though I did battle soccer, football and cross country competition that weekend, there is no excuse for me to miss an opportunity to worship at church. My relationship with God comes first, and everything else functions around that relationship."

Physically, Frederick takes a pounding. Every muscle aches from running cross-country. She takes a lot of bumps and bruises from the pounding of a 90-minute soccer match. And spending hours underneath a stifling tiger costume, along with the physical activity of entertaining, can leave her on the verge of dehydration.

But Frederick loves the mascot's role so much that when she agreed to play athletics, she took on the added responsibility last year with one stipulation—Toby comes first. Her mascot duties caused her to miss some meets and a few soccer games the past two years, but her coaches have been patient and understanding, she said.

"I like to think that Toby is more than just a college mascot, that's he's become a community icon," Frederick said. And being mascot for a Baptist school has special benefits.

“I don’t get mugged by drunk or unruly game-watchers. I get to take postcard photographs with the president’s family,” she said. “And if another mascot ever messes with me, I have a mob of angry Baptists to back me up!”

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