

# Ultimate Training Camp integrates faith, sports, sweat

August 29, 2013

WACO—Baylor Bears quarterback Bryce Petty never has been put through a workout he couldn't do. But Petty, a Midlothian native, finally met his match at Ultimate Training Camp, held recently at Baylor University.



Baylor football player Joe Williams competes in relay races in an exercise to learn to work together and express worship through attitude and body. (PHOTO/Graham Dodd/Baylor University) More than 80 Baylor Christian student-athletes attended to learn how to integrate faith into their sports. The camp intellectually and spiritually tested them over four days as they explored identity, motivation, attitude, virtue, and winning and losing through sport and physical activity.

The camp was designed to put sports in its proper place, said John B. White, director of the sports chaplaincy and ministry program at Baylor's [Truett Theological Seminary](#).

Ultimate Training Camp hosts camps around the world, but Baylor is the first top-tier academic and athletic institution to host a camp, he said. The seminary and Baylor athletics department teamed up to help transform how athletes think about, value and play sports, he said.

“The first lecture is a talk on idolatry. Sports often get inflated to an ultimate concern, which misdirects and challenges our worship and trust in God,” White said. “Sports can create spaces to practice God’s presence.

“God’s love and grace are central to why Christian athletes play and enjoy sports. This motivation liberates athletes from using sports for personal gain, rewards and fame. When athletes are imprisoned by imaginations and pressures extrinsic to their games, they often cheat and alienate others—bringing out their worst and damaging excellence.”

Many of the student-athletes’ toughest—and most meaningful—moments of camp came on the final day, when they ran a great distance through part of the Brazos River and across a bridge. They carried boards across their shoulders to identify with Jesus’ journey to the cross as the basis of their own identity in sports and life.



For their final challenge, student-athletes—including Brittany OgunMokun, Baylor track and

field—carry a cross-beam to reflect on the death of Christ. (PHOTO/Graham Dodd/Baylor University)“At this point, I was physically, mentally, spiritually—just any other kind of way that you could put it—just exhausted,” Petty said. “It was really cool, because I had never been at that point to need God to get through it.”

Dallas native Hope Ogden, a member of Baylor’s volleyball team, noted: “Everyone was so encouraging, and it was like the top of the mountain that we had just finished. It was definitely one of the hardest things I’ve ever done.”

At camp’s end, Ogden and Petty said they saw changes not just in themselves, but in their teammates and the way they perform individually and as a team.

“I think the biggest part of (the camp) was having our whole team go through it together. It brought us a lot closer, and we can hold each other accountable for what we know,” Ogden said.

Although players may lose the immediacy of their “summer camp high,” Petty said, he “can definitely tell there’s a difference in what they’re playing for and who they’re playing for.”

Track and cross country athlete Brittany OgunMokun, who completed her undergraduate degree from Baylor University last year, described Ultimate Training Camp as “awesome.”

“I have never experienced something whereby I could not rely on my athletic ability to get me through something,” she said. “At the end of UTC, when we had to carry the cross and wade in the lake, my physical limitations stopped me in my tracks and made me rely on God to carry me the rest of the way back.”

OgunMokun, originally from Landover, Md., is a member of Antioch

Community Church and involved in Fellowship of Christian Athletes with Petty, where the quarterback first heard about the camp.

This fall, OgunMokun begins her first year at Truett studying sports ministry and says she is “more excited now than ever that I will be able to reach athletes in my sports ministry career in the way I was reached at the Ultimate Training Camp.”

Truett students were invited to attend to learn how to minister in an athletic environment. Bryan DeVries, a second-year theology student from Corpus Christi, said it was “particularly neat to be able to witness how many of the Baylor athletes quickly integrated what they learned in the teaching sessions into the other camp events.

“Many of their focuses changed from within themselves to without, relying on God as their source of motivation for how they compete as athletes.”

Nearly all of those who attended Baylor’s Ultimate Training Camp said they felt they were beginning to understand how to integrate faith in their sport.

“UTC was a blessing for our student-athletes that enabled them to form great relationships with teammates and fellow student-athletes while growing in their faith,” Director of Baylor Athletics Ian McCaw said.