

TALLY SPORTS

**STUDENT
ATHLETE
EDITION**



Written by Cailyn Henson

Life As A Student Athlete



Tanner pitching for Leesburg Lightning, photo from team photographer.

The Basics

Many college students have a hard time finding balance, with school, a job, friendships and whatever else life may throw at them. Now imagine competing at a collegiate level in a sport as well. According to a NCAA survey “Many student-athletes, however, reported that they practice at least 30 hours a week on average, with some sports reporting weekly practice commitments of more than 40 hours” (Business insider) Among this survey Baseball was the sport with the largest time commitment at an average of 42 hours per week of practice, which is approximately 5.9 hours a day. This can be overwhelming on top of being your best academically as well. Tanner Walker has been competing at a collegiate level in baseball for the past 2 years, and continues to now. Tanner is from Eustis, Florida, about 37 miles north of Orlando. Tanner discovered his love for baseball at a young age. He was competing in motor-cross when he was young and decided one day that it wasn’t for him anymore. He shared “ I chose to play baseball because my parents pushed me to try something new, I used to do motocross and decided that it wasn’t for me anymore. When I tried baseball, I fell in love with the game and have been playing since I was 12, baseball is a huge part of who I am today”.

“Baseball is a huge part of who I am today”

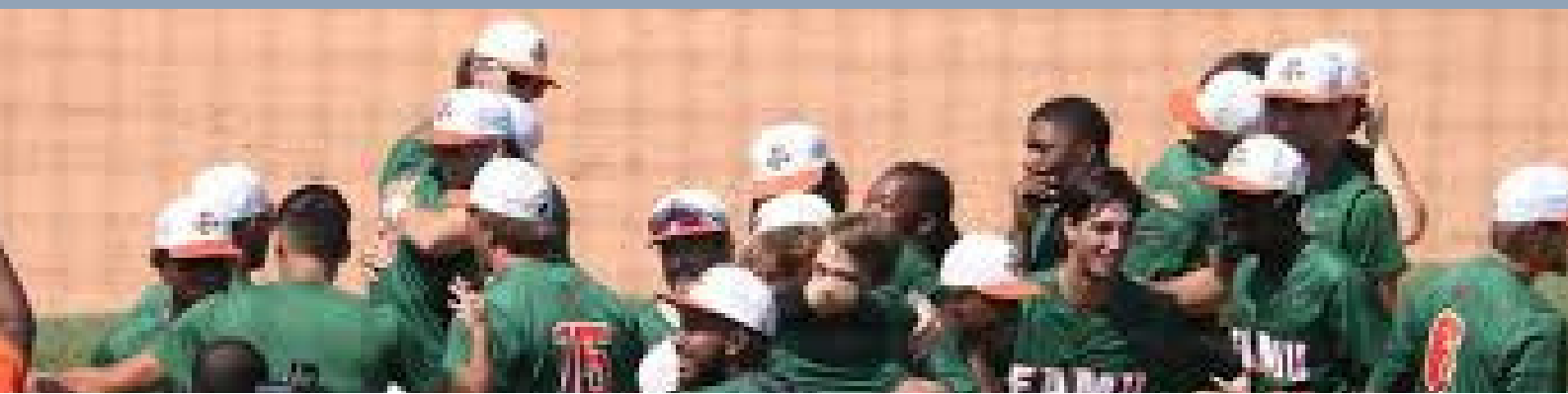


St. Johns River State Baseball team, photo from webpage.

New Teams, Same Game

Tanner played baseball all throughout high school and then when it was time to graduate, he had to decide if he wanted to play in college. Tanner got an offer to play at St. Petersburg College, although it was not a division one school, he decided to take the offer. Taking this offer meant he is still able to play the game he loves. In August of 2021 Tanner moved to Clearwater, Florida to go continue his baseball career at SPC. In this time Tanner faced many obstacles, living alone for the first time in a new place, meeting new people, and adjusting to a college workload. He worked hard to be the best he could be on his team and ended up having a good season. As the next year comes by he has to evaluate his options, would he stay at SPC, or try to find a program better fit for him? Tanner received an offer from another community college, St Johns River State. Located in Palatka, Florida, this school offers a competitive and hardworking atmosphere. Tanner decided to take the offer and go to SJRS. During his time at this school his team ended up competing in the Junior College World Series in Enid, Oklahoma. This was a huge accomplishment for the team, and something Tanner says he will never forget. He said, "competing with this team has been amazing, these guys are like my family and being at the World Series was a surreal experience". Tanner also shared what values he appreciates most in a team, he said "some that are important in a team are being able to bond with teammates and getting along well despite others differences, taking the game seriously and everyone be working towards the same Goal because if everyone doesn't have the same goal in mind nobody is going to achieve their goals". This evaluation of what values are important in a team shows how relationships with teammates are extremely important. Most athletes only play at a junior college for two years, after this time they either continue at another level or decide to move on from their sport. As the year ended for him Tanner had a huge decision to make, but also had offers on the table. Tanner received an offer from Florida A&M, a division one school in Tallahassee, Florida. This was a huge accomplishment for Tanner as his goal was to always compete at a division one school. Tanner took the offer and just stated playing at FAMU in the fall. He shared "being able to compete at a division one school has always been my dream, all of my hard work finally paid off and I see meaning in all that I have had to overcome". Switching schools three times may have not been easy, but it has all played a role in helping Tanner develop his athletic ability to the best it can be.

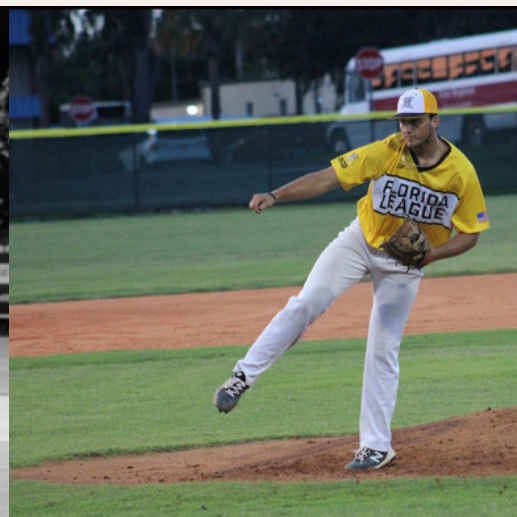
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Finding The Balance

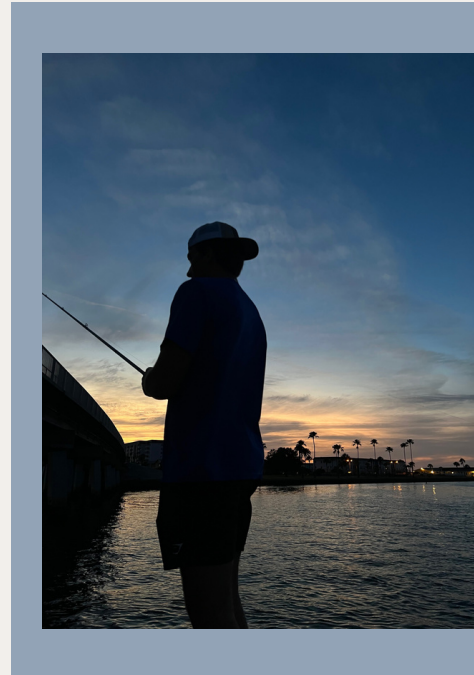
The hardest thing for student, athletes to do is finding balance. They have to make time to perform well academically, practice their sport, spend time with friends and family, and juggle other extracurriculars they may be in. Doing this is hard, and no one knows the best way to balance life as a student athlete. Tanner shared how he tries to find balance.” “The biggest thing is time management, it's important to get your assignments done on time, getting enough sleep and taking care of yourself is also key. It’s important to get assignments done so that you can focus on your sport and be the best you can be. When you play at a high level, the game is a mental game so if you have your mind on school or other things, then you won’t be able to perform to your best ability’s.” Many athletes struggle with finding balance, but Tanner has been able to find what works best for him, doing this has helped him become successful academically and athletically. Although there may be challenges along the way, learning to find the balance has been so important to him.



Tanner playing for Leesburg Lightning, photos by team photographer.

Off The Field

Aside from Baseball, Tanner has a love for hunting and fishing. When he has free time, he spends it on the water catching fish, or in the woods hunting. Hunting and fishing are both something that helps Tanner relax. He shared this “when you are out in nature it is very peaceful and gives you a good break to relax”. Having passions outside of being a student athlete are important for mental health, its healthy to have something that gets your mind off of the stress of sports and college, hunting an fishing do just that for Tanner.



Tanner fishing in Dunedin, FL, taken by Cailyn Henson.



Tanner duck hunting in central FL, taken by Cailyn Henson

Family and friends are something Tanner values as well, making time for them is a necessity for him. Tanner has a younger sister who is his best friend, it's hard for him to see her because of where she lives but he makes a point to call her as much as he can. Tanner's parents are very special to him he shared that “someone who helped me get to where I am is my parents, they have always pushed me to do better for myself and taught me how to manage my time, be a good person and pushed me to do my best academically”. Parents are people who have a huge impact on our lives, and you can see that Tanner values everything his parents have taught him.