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Philadelphia 76ers
Graduated in 1986
Majored in Zoology

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Where was home before C of I? And how did you end up at the College? What drew you to the College?

I spent my teenage years living in Bend Oregon. In 1982 I graduated from Mountain View High School. I was a competitive alpine ski racer and after the Oregon High School State Meet I was contacted by the Head Ski Coach from the College of Idaho and he offered me a scholarship to ski for The College of Idaho. This opportunity made my decision to move to Caldwell easy. The College of Idaho had a great reputation as a small liberal arts college with an excellent ski team. I loved the fact that the College of Idaho was so close to the mountains and less than one day's drive to Bend Oregon.

How did your C of I degree in Zoology assist you in your career path?

I focused most of my attention on my skiing for my first couple of years and enrolled in a wide range of "pre-requisite" courses while my major was "undecided". During my junior year I saw that the C of I had an opportunity to study abroad in Australia. However, this study tour was only available for Biology or Zoology majors. As I transitioned into my junior year, Botany would allow me to become a Biology major and Comparative Anatomy would allow me to become a Zoology major. I thought Comparative Anatomy would be more interesting. That is how I became a Zoology major and ended up going to Australia for a Semester. In Australia I participated in a number of research projects. When I returned back to Idaho I had a chance to present some of my findings at a regional science conference and ended up winning the best undergraduate paper award which raised my interest in a career as a scientist. During my senior year I took an exercise physiology course as an elective and I really enjoyed it. I ended up getting a Graduate Assistantship at Northern Michigan University. I took on the role of assistant ski team coach and pursued my Master of Science Degree in Exercise Physiology. My degree in Zoology from C of I involved a number of science courses and these experiences gave me a strong research skill set that served me well in graduate school. Once I began to specialize in exercise physiology and elite sport I had the unique opportunity to become a research assistant at the USOTC in Colorado Springs. I then moved to Laramie, Wyoming, to complete a doctoral program in Exercise Physiology at the University of Wyoming. Ironically, my first professional job was as a sport scientist at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, Australia. It is still hard to believe that I ended up working at the AIS for 21 years! Who would have known that my C of I study abroad experience in Australia would have been so relevant for my first job after graduate school.

What are some of your favorite memories of C of I? Favorite professors? Experiences/events?

I loved my time at C of I! So many great memories made with the ski team led by Ernie Meissner (the head ski coach). We had lots of memorable adventures travelling around the Northwest training and competing against other university teams. I was fortunate to have many passionate, dedicated professors who really were committed to their teaching. I will never forget when Prof. Howard Berger set up an appointment with me to discuss my poor performance on my first exam in "History of the 3rd

Reich". Dr. Berger thought my effort wasn't up to a high standard. I couldn't believe a college professor would be so committed to his students. I ended up doing very well in that course after I realized that pursuing excellence is a worthy goal regardless of the topic. My academic supervisor, Dr. Sheri Robison, was extremely influential as she worked to tie together my eclectic interests and find a major that suited me. Dr. Eric Yensen was in charge of the study tour to Australia that ended up profoundly influencing my professional career. I stayed in the Simplot Dorm (note: at that time, clearly the best dorm on campus) and the many students and faculty I met at C of I shaped the way I viewed the world. Both my younger brother and sister attended C of I. My brother not only earned a degree from C of I but he also met his future wife (Laurie Newcomb). Now years later my niece, Micaela Martin, is a graduate from C of I and my nephew, Alex Martin, is currently a C of I student. In a strange twist of fate, I am now living in the same neighborhood in Philadelphia as my freshman roommate, Cary Coglianese, who is currently a law professor at University of Pennsylvania. From my perspective, the C of I has been a gift that just keeps on giving.

What was your path to spend so much of your career in Australia?

After I graduated with my PhD in Zoology and Physiology from the University of Wyoming, I applied for teaching/research opportunities at universities in the United States. In addition, I applied for a few sport science jobs overseas. When I was at the Olympic Training Center I had met a number of Australian Sport Scientists and was very interested to see if I could land a job at the famous Australian Institute of Sport. Fortunately for me, the Aussies were looking for a scientist to look after some altitude training programs for the Australian Olympic Cycling team leading into the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta Georgia. Because I was familiar with many of the US altitude training venues and because I had a relevant research focus (overtraining and fatigue in elite athletes), I ended up getting a two-year contract at the AIS. Once the '96 Olympic Games finished a number of job opportunities opened up at the AIS leading into the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. I eventually became the national sport science coordinator for Cycling Australia in addition to retaining a Senior Sport Science role with the AIS. Grant funding was good, facilities were amazing, the research culture was inspiring, and my colleagues were excellent. As a result, my wife and I decided to stay in Canberra Australia and start a family. My two sons were born and raised in Australia and I now have many close friends and colleagues from "Down Under". I have always wondered what my life would be like if I didn't take that trip to Australia as a C of I undergraduate. After 21 years of living and working in Australia, a unique opportunity (Director of Performance) opened up in the NBA with the Philadelphia 76ers. I now live in Philadelphia and my boys are getting a chance to experience a US school. At the age of 54 my wife and I are starting yet another new chapter in our life.

And on the flip-side of the last question, after so much success in Australia, what brought you back to the U.S. and your job with the Sixers?

I was really enjoying my role as a sport scientist in Australia when I was offered the position of Director of Performance Research and Development with the Philadelphia 76ers. This job allowed me to join a very ambitious group of owners, sports administrators, coaches, and support staff who were interested in designing and developing a world class NBA basketball team. After more than 20 years at the AIS I was allowed to take two years of "long service leave" which enabled me to preserve my sport science job at the AIS while I explored the unique challenge of working in the NBA. After two years with the 76ers I made the decision to resign from the AIS and fully commit to the Philadelphia 76ers who are motivated to tackle some great challenges in Professional Sport.

Your job with the 76ers sounds fascinating. What does it entail?

I was hired by the Philadelphia 76ers as a Director of Performance Research and Development. Primary objectives of my new position included 1) make a meaningful contribution to the design of a new training facility, 2) hire a team of support staff that looked after player health and fitness, and 3) integrate emerging technology into our programs allowing efficient data collection and novel insights into ways to improve performance. In my first two years I was able to hire 6 new staff and reposition 4 other staff. I am currently working in a brand new facility and integrating contemporary technology into our daily operating environment. I currently serve on the NBA Sport Science Committee and am allowed to maintain an adjunct appointment at the University of Canberra. Our primary objectives are to advise the front office on best practice in the areas of player selection, development, competition support and return-to-play. I am in a position where I am able to lead and advise physical therapists, athletic trainers, massage therapists, nutritionists, psychologists, skill acquisition specialists, sleep specialists, sport physiologists, sport technicians, coaches, and other sport science specialists. When required, I travel with the team and I am often involved with many of the difficult player health management cases.

When was the last time you were at the C of I? Do you keep up with former classmates?

Sadly, I have not been on campus for more than a decade. Although there are not many classmates (aside from my family) that I have kept in touch with, as mentioned earlier, my freshman roommate and I have re-united in Philadelphia which has been nice. I also follow a couple of individuals on social media that used to be part of the ski team.

What are your thoughts/emotions about being chosen as one of your alma mater's distinguished alumni?

It has been both a surprise and an honor to be chosen as The College of Idaho's distinguished alumni. From my perspective, The College of Idaho is doing a wonderful job of creating a unique educational opportunity for the students. By reaching out and recognizing me with this prestigious award I feel that the College is giving current and former students a chance to identify with one of many unique and interesting career pathways C of I graduates can create. Back in 1986, I would never have imagined that my undergraduate degree in Zoology would eventually lead me to work in the NBA. I would like to sincerely thank all of the staff and faculty at The College of Idaho that contributed to my learning experience and I am very grateful to be recognized as this year's distinguished alumnus.