

College, Career & Life Planning



Follow Your Dream.....But Have A Back-up Plan

Many young people dream of being a professional athlete or a movie star. We see them on TV all the time. Some make multi-million dollar salaries. They seem to be idolized by everyone. It must be great having 50,000 fans cheering for you.

It is great to set your goals high. People who set low goals usually do not achieve great things.

If you aspire to an occupation with few openings and lots of competition, follow your dreams, but have a back-up plan. Approach the challenge with your “eyes open”. If possible, talk to people who have “made it” and those who “have not” in the career. Ask them about the challenges. Often, reality is different than perception.

Frequently, in Hollywood and in professional sports, success is determined by more than just talent and ambition. There are many talented actors who never get “their big break” and spend years waiting tables. Some very talented athletes suffer career-ending injuries before reaching the professional level. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the median hourly pay in 2009 for actors was \$16.20. In 2009 the median annual salary for athletes was \$40,200. Movie and sports stars make megabucks, but for every “star” there are hundreds or thousands of other people struggling to “make it”.

Experts estimate that only one in 10,000 high school athletes will succeed as a professional athlete. The table below shows the odds of succeeding in a few professional sports for the average high school athlete.

Sport	Number of High School Players in U.S.*	Estimated Number of High School Players Graduating Each Year	New Major League Professional per Year*	Odds
Football	1,023,712	255,928	192	1 in 1333
Boys Basketball	540,597	135,149	58	1 in 2330
Girls Basketball	456,169	114,042	40	1 in 2851
Baseball	451,674	112,918	300	1 in 376

*Source: iSeek.org

If you have the talent, ambition and determination, do not give up on your dream. Some people win the lottery and their odds are much worse than those in the above table. However, it is essential that you develop a back-up plan. Develop employable skills so you will have attractive alternatives in the event that your “dream career” is unattainable.