

but not being defined as a football player," Guritz says. "It wasn't until I got away from the sport that I realized how much the sport defined me. It really defined my friendships; it defined how people knew me." He had prided himself on being an exception to the student-athlete stereotype, someone who was much more than the sport he played.

But the pressure and time constraints of being a student at Northwestern limited Guritz's time to do other things while juggling his athletic schedule. Guritz dedicated 20 hours a week to football and his teammates were his closest friends. Now away from his sport for the first time, he, like many other athletes and students, was forced to realize who he was apart from the thing that used to define him. Those who have quit struggle to build new relationships, find their niche and essentially develop a new life at NU.

Disengaged from the team, Guritz says the biggest difference he experienced was in his social life. He didn't get to see his football friends anymore, forcing him to find a new group of friends. Determined

to reimagine himself, Guritz tried many different things. He joined and then dropped out of a fraternity, disenchanted by the fast-paced promotion of brotherhood. He then turned to his major, industrial engineering, and found a sense of community.

"I've been very fortunate to have a job within the industrial engineering department because that's where I joined different clubs and met all sorts of wonderful people," Gurtz says.

According to former fencer and SESP junior Christina Allen, the fear of being disconnected from former teammates can be overwhelming.

"They're your best friends, so if you quit the team, you have no one else," Allen says.

However, some ex-athletes have kept in close contact with former teammates. Caroline Grant, a Weinberg senior who quit varsity diving in the spring of 2015, says her friendships with old teammates are still intact. She thought her biggest adjustment would be not spending time with the

team daily, but she still sees them regularly.

"Really, the newest thing is not having to be at the pool every day," Grant says.

Another big change comes in the form of scheduling. Allen says the demands of her Learning and Organizational Change and Economics double major require classes that conflicted with her practices—practices she was told she could not miss. She chose to leave the team after her freshman year. With this free time, she can schedule classes whenever she likes.

"The biggest difference is that I sleep a lot more," Allen says. "I really feel like I'm still so busy. There are so many other things you can pursue at Northwestern that will help you later in life, so it felt a little silly to me to keep going."

For Grant, quitting diving allowed her to gain a new perspective on her identity that left behind the judgemental nature of her sport.

"I'm trying not to define my identity based on my accomplishments but more on

my relationships," Grant says. "It's more about how I can relate to other people."

But for some, like Guritz, the wound is still healing. While he is sure he made the right move, he admits that it is still hard to be in the football stands instead of out on the field.

"It's like like when you see an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, and they have a really smoking hot date for homecoming," Guritz says. "You hoped that after you broke up they'd be totally in shambles and just get fat off ice cream for the rest of their lives."

Life is different for these students now. Guritz traded in his old 5:30 a.m. wake-up call for an 8:30 a.m. alarm before class. Allen goes to sorority functions instead of team dinners. Grant goes to class at 1 p.m. instead of practice. But all of these changes are bound to happen at some point, Guritz says. He even says that it was an advantage to experience this transition earlier.

"I'm at peace with it but the whole year-long process was brutal," Guritz says. "But, at the same time I'm very thankful for it."

