Student LAWYER

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Graduation and the Olympics Are Just a Hammer's Throw Away

This summer **Martin Bingisser** will be facing pressures bigger than the bar exam. He'll be competing to win a spot on the U.S. Olympic Team.

His sport of choice? The hammer throw. He throws the 16-pound ball on a chain a distance of more than 220 feet. That puts him in an elite group of athletes.

Bingisser, a third-year student at **University of Washington School of Law** in Seattle, will spend the summer trying to earn a spot on the U.S. Olympic track team as a hammer thrower—a sport he's been competing in since he was a senior in high school.

He'll have to maintain his rank as one of the top 20 hammer throwers in the United States to earn an invitation to the Olympic trials. "Barring any unforeseen circumstances, I'll qualify for the Olympic trials," he says. The top three hammer throwers at the Olympic trials will make the team.

You might think that maintaining your status as an Olympic-caliber athlete would be difficult during law school, and you would be right. "There aren't many people in law school who compete in athletics," says Bingisser. "Looking back, I'm amazed that I've made it."

Bingisser, who will graduate this month, did make it, through his own discipline and the help of coaches, teammates, professors, and family. But he didn't advertise his participation in athletics for fear of what others would think of his plan.

"I didn't mention my track interests on my application for law school because I didn't want people to think I was crazy," explains Bingisser. "I didn't want anyone to be skeptical. I knew I could find a way to make things work out."

And he did find a way to make it work. He cut back on the hours he spent training but maintained the same rate of progress in his throwing. He worked with his coaches to find a schedule that made sense. That meant some days he was training at 8 a.m. and other days he was training at 6 p.m.

Martin Bingisser

Track meets sometimes conflicted with his law school schedule.

"The NCAA championship meet was held during finals week of my first and second years." So the law school administration allowed Bingisser to take his exams on the road and provided a proctor to administer them.

"The administration was really accommodating," says Bingisser, who competed throughout law school, using his summers to both gain work experience and continue his athletic training.

"During my first summer, I stayed in Seattle and worked for a solo practitioner who is a big sports fan. He was also really accommodating of my athletic pursuits. My second summer I worked in Washington, D.C."

While Bingisser was busy with work, he still found time to train. "It was harder to find places to train in D.C.," he says, "so I did a lot of weight room training. On weekends I went to the **University of Maryland** and used their facilities to throw."

As Bingisser has worked his way through three years of law school, he's seen how the skills of time management and attention to detail he's learned in athletics have contributed to his academic success.

"More than anything, the time management required to balance athletics with everything else has helped me with law," says Bingisser. "When I start to study or work, I realize that I want to be efficient with the time. There's a limited amount of time, and you want to do the most you can with the time you have. There's also a point when I need to stop studying and clear my mind and go work out."

As to developing his attention to detail, Bingisser credits the hammer throw: "From the outsider's perspective, hammer is a brute-strength sport. But it's really an intellectual sport. So many technical elements go into it. You have to pay attention to detail.

"The mindset of a successful hammer thrower has a corollary to law. Law requires the same attention to detail, wanting to be the best, wanting to succeed.

"That being said," Bingisser admits, "I don't know any hammer throwers who are lawyers." •

Kristi Lemoine

Do you know a distinguished law student (continuing in 2008–09) who would make an interesting subject for Spotlight? E-mail suggestions and contact information to studentlawyer@abanet.org *(subject line: Spotlight).*

PHOTO BY BRIAN BEAKY