

SMASHED THE IMPACT OF SMASHED

The video Smashed upset me a lot. I think people going off to college should have to watch that before they enter college. It made me think of how lucky I am that nothing bad happened that night to me or to anyone else. Drinking and driving do not mix. Nothing good ever happens when someone drinks and then gets behind the wheel and drives. As the video showed, the lives of many people are changed forever as a result of an accident caused by drinking and driving. The injuries can be devastating to the parents and families of those hurt too. Sometimes people never recover emotionally, physically and economically from that kind of an accident.

All of us have dreams. Our parents have dreams for us. We have our own dreams. Student athletes start out when they are very young practicing a sport. They spend hours working hard to get good. Their parents spend hours and hours taking them to practice, feeding them, helping them become the athlete they become. My own parents have given up everything to help me become what I am. They have spent thousands of dollars to help me become what I want to be.

All that is thrown away in an instant if I drink and drive. All of the hours I spent practicing. All of my coaches' hours spent helping me. All of my parents' hours taking me from game to game, practice to practice. All of the money they have spent to help me get better. It can all be for nothing if I make a stupid decision. And that does not even take into consideration what I could do to my team and my teammates. I am a part of a team. I have an obligation to that team, my coaches, my teammates and the University of North Carolina. The University and Coach Williams have given me a huge benefit. I have a scholarship to go to one of the best (and in my opinion THE BEST) University in the country. I have help with classes. I have help with my basketball skills. I have help becoming an honorable human being who can contribute to society. And I can do that while doing what I enjoy most -- playing basketball. I love my teammates. I depend on them and they depend on me.

This event and the movie Smashed made me realize that with one bad judgment -- one bad decision to drink and drive -- I can ruin all of that. I could hurt the University and let them down. I could hurt my teammates and ruin their chances of winning the NCAA. I could hurt my coaches who have spent hours and hours helping me. I could hurt my parents who spent hours and their money making me what I am. And I could hurt myself or worse, someone else. The movie Smashed showed how the lives of so many people are changed forever, just because someone made a bad decision to drink and drive.

Like the movie Smashed, we all saw what can happen when a good person and athlete makes a bad decision and drives after drinking. One of our tennis players here hit two students and hurt them after driving his car and drinking. The girls are in the hospital and hopefully will be OK. But they were hurt just walking down the street. He has had to leave school, lose his scholarship, and give up all the years of training and hard work he and his parents have done to make him a scholarship athlete. He now faces serious criminal charges that will cost he and his family a lot and will be with him for the rest of his life. Hopefully the girls will recover, but it will be hard for them too because they are out of school while they recover. And the teammates of Chris will be hurt too. They have a great team and will now be missing one of the star players. College is meant to be fun. All of us want to have fun. We all want to go to parties and enjoy ourselves. We want to have fun with our friends and hang out. But we have to do that in a responsible way. We have to be very careful how we party. If we are over 21, it is ok to drink, but not drive. If we are under 21, we need to have fun some other way. Nothing good happens late at night when a car and alcohol are mixed. What makes it hard is that when we drink we do not make good choices because the alcohol clouds our judgment. Watching Smashed was very hard for me because it made me realize what I could have done if I had hit and hurt someone or hit something and hurt myself.

I have learned a lot from this experience and know that I will NEVER drink and drive. One of the things I have learned from this is that if we are going to party, we need to have someone with us that can help make good choices. Someone who can say don't do that. I have a wonderful family, friends, teammates, coaches and a career. I do not want to do anything that would hurt what I have. I do not want to hurt someone else. I do not think I could live with that for the rest of my life if I seriously hurt someone and their families by drinking and driving. The families in the video Smashed were never the same. The parents suffered as much as the person who was hurt. Their lives were miserable after that. They had to take care of seriously injured children who would never get better. It just shows how one bad decision can change the lifetime for someone else. I hope we all make better decisions. I know I will.