outside the Lines:

Pardon Ndhlovu wants to give back

n Nick Phillips

Pardon Ndhlovu is making a name for himself as one of UNCP’s most prolific athletes. The Zimbabwe native is a member of both the Braves cross-country and track and field programs, and the junior is a two-time NCAA Division II Cross Country National Championship participant.

But when he’s not training year-round, Ndhlovu is just another UNCP student—albeit a very busy one.

Zimbabwe is a small country in the Central Southern African Continent with a population of over 12 million people and 14 different languages that are spoken in different regions of the country. English is an official language in Zimbabwe since the country was a colony of Britain. Ndhlovu says that while both the U.S. and Zimbabwe share English as their official languages and both use dollars as their currency, the cost of living in America is much higher. “Zimbabwe is a peaceful and friendly country which is pretty diverse, just the same as Pembroke. I did not have any trouble acclimating to this culture at Pembroke or American culture as a whole since I grew up in a diverse environment,” Ndhlovu said.

Unlike America, Zimbabwe uses the metric system and we drive on the left side of the road and 90 percent of the cars you find in Zimbabwe are black, according to Ndhlovu. When classes are complete for the spring semester and students take in summer, Ndhlovu does not.

Zimbabwe summers run from October to April, and from May to September Zimbabwe experiences winter, leaving Ndhlovu to experience two winters per year. The Zimbabwe rainy season runs from November through March, and is not as humid as Pembroke.

“It took me a while to adjust to the humidity here,” Ndhlovu said.

In comparing the food options between the two countries, they are very similar, according to Ndhlovu. He added that there are no McDonald’s in Zimbabwe but, they do have some fast food places.

“Any day I am to choose between Zimbabwean pizza and American pizza, I can always go with Zimbabwean pizza,” Ndhlovu said.

Most people in Zimbabwe rely on cooking their food every day, while here in Pembroke we buy prepackaged food for convenience’s sake, Ndhlovu added.

Ndhlovu has been named one of the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) Track and Field All-Academic Honoree, as well as the USTFCCCA Cross Country All-Academic Honoree. He has several plans for his future, both academically and athletically. Becoming unundergraduate studies, Ndhlovu wants to “have created better opportunities for some athletes back home to nurture and develop their talent at any level.”

His goal is to get his Masters degree and, if possible, expand his coaching experience as a Graduate Assistant with the cross-country team. “I know I have been blessed with the ability and desire to utilize my running talent, and I pray that I stay healthy so I continue to work as hard as I have been athletically,” Ndhlovu said.

“If I continue being in good health, I know great opportunities will open up in the next coming years and I might run professionally. If I live takes me that way, I will go with it as long as I have a way to uplift, inspire and build a dream of someone like me from Zimbabwe or Africa as a whole,” he added.

In addition to athletics, Ndhlovu is a Supplemental Instruction and also volunteer his time to several campus activities “be it sports or service days as a way of giving back to the community.”

“I am also a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes which meets every Tuesday evening to uplift athletes’ spiritual lives,” he said.

As for his experiences here at UNCP, Ndhlovu loves it.

We have the small classes that we have. They allow for personal interaction with the professors. There are greater opportunities here at Pembroke for students to study whatever field they want and I have come in contact with great professors that have taught me one or two lessons about life apart from class lectures. The people are friendly and I feel at home away from home,” he said.

When competing, Ndhlovu describes himself as “being slightly different than he usually is. “I am in a racing mode,” he said.

Ndhlovu the person, however, is a “humble, friendly, sociable person who is easy to get along with.”

“I am a confident and outgoing person and always with a smile on my face. I do my work diligently be it school work, running or my job and am an adventurous person who likes to learn new things every day,” he said.

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