Former Washburn athletes Bobby Chipman and Marty Pfannenstiel have decided to bring their “game” to a new arena, Washburn Law. Already familiar with the term “practice,” these first-year law students are tackling new concepts with the same drive and skills that first brought them success playing sports.

Marty Pfannenstiel played linebacker for the Washburn football team from 2007 to 2011. Bobby Chipman played forward for the Washburn basketball team from 2009 to 2013. As student athletes, each was named to the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association (MIAA) Academic Honor Roll.

Chipman received calls from agents to play overseas but instead decided to focus on a law career. He relied on the reputation of Washburn Law to help make his decision. “I’ve been around Washburn my whole life. My dad is the basketball coach, and I’ve always been concerned about the basketball team, but I’ve always heard the law school is great,” Chipman said. “I’ve heard from plenty of family and friends who have said it’s a great place.”

Pfannenstiel, a native of Silver Lake, did not grow up around Washburn but knew of its reputation. Curious about law for years, it wasn’t until last summer, while working for an insurance firm, that co-workers successfully persuaded him to try. He took the LSAT in June, applied to Washburn Law, and before he knew it, was handing his boss a two-week notice. “It was a drastic change in my life,” Pfannenstiel said. “Law school is definitely more time consuming and a lot more demanding, but much more interesting because I have a desire to learn about the law.”

Chipman also admits law school is a definite change but said as an athlete he has learned how to push things to the limit. “Just like with sports, you have to be able to prepare, practice, and defeat,” Chipman said.

And of course competition comes into play. Chipman explained how students are ranked in law school. Grading is dependent on the performance of others in addition to your own. “In basketball you learn to be competitive and give it your best every time … to make sure that you give your team the best chance to win,” Chipman said. “Just like here at law school, you’ve got to study, work your hardest, and give yourself the best chance you can to get the highest grade.”

According to Chipman, being a college athlete was like having two jobs: working hard on the court or field to help the team win while also working hard in the classroom to obtain the desired degree. Now he works just as hard for law school.

“Law school is like having two full-time jobs only it’s the same one,” Chipman said. “You’ve got to really learn how to manage your time well, and that’s something that carries over from being a student athlete into law school.”

In addition to good time management, stress management is essential for success. Pfannenstiel understands the level of stress first-year law students can experience but said playing football has equipped him to better handle it. One of the best stress relievers for him is exercise, which helps the rest of his day go better. Despite a busy schedule, he attempts to keep the early morning workout routine carried over from his football career. Pfannenstiel also loves to play a round of golf when time allows, which isn’t much these days. “Law school really cut into my golf game,” Pfannenstiel said with a grin.

Chipman also likes to play golf when he finds the time. He is currently a graduate assistant basketball coach for the Washburn Ichabods and recently played on an alumni team in a scrimmage against this year’s team.

As Washburn undergraduate students, both studied accounting and hope to obtain CPA certification in the future. Chipman is working toward the dual degree program at Washburn Law, which will also earn him an M.B.A.

Chipman says he can see himself working for a law firm someday, preferably in business transactions or tax law, while Pfannenstiel hopes to work in the insurance field. Whether they eventually decide to practice law or not, both agree a law school education is beneficial for any career. Halfway through their first year, both are already impressed...
Marty Pfannenstiel was a linebacker for the Washburn Ichabods from 2007 to 2011.

Bobby Chipman played forward for the Washburn basketball team from 2009 to 2013.

Marty Pfannenstiel, standing, and Bobby Chipman, seated.

with how Washburn Law has positively changed the way they think, read, and comprehend.

And write. Pfannenstiel said writing is one of the most important aspects of law school, and he is impressed with the reputation of Washburn's legal writing program. He also finds the structured study groups for 1L students very beneficial.

"Everybody has questions," Pfannenstiel said. "I don't know if many other law schools do this, but it helps everybody get adjusted that first year."

Although these former Ichabod athletes aren't in the same study group, they consider themselves part of the same "team" with the same goal: giving their best as Washburn Law students just like they once did for their respective sports teams.

Pfannenstiel is happy with his decision to go to law school and said he would absolutely recommend it to other athletes.

"It definitely can't hurt you," Chipman said. "All you are going to do is expand your knowledge and horizons."