I chose to make another observation for the second set of data. I felt that I can improve in certain areas from my last one, and I wanted to draw a closer correlation to the group project. The observation that took place was at Ubben basketball facility in Champaign, across from Assembly Hall. I was fortunate to have one of my class projects for another class take senior citizens from the nursing home to visit the basketball facility and view and meet a few of the players. This was also key for my observation, seeing that the trip was designed for the older adults, therefore I could silently take field notes. The observation took roughly one hour. The main locations that were visited were the male and female basketball gyms. The latter part of the observation dealt with the older adults meeting some of the players and watching them practice.

The main factor that was looked at or observed in this study was the relationship between fans and the players. Being that the semester project is on student body athletes and how they are perceived, this was a good opportunity to see what the adults had to say. Not to be disrespectful, but older adults tend to voice their opinions more freely than others. No harm intended; it’s just the way some of them are. So that was a huge benefit, because a more realistic and natural reaction to the players would be assessed rather than maybe a college student who left back certain opinions. For example, as our tour guide was taking us through the facility, one adult mentioned that maybe they should get a new coach. This was referring to the men’s coach, after a disappointing season. Even though he was laughing and joking when he said it, it would still be considered disrespectful from a younger student saying that. For the first 20 minutes or so, the tour consisted of viewing different pictures and trophies. This was taking away from what needed to be observed,
and that was the players. After realizing that, I glanced around to look if I saw any, and found about 6 players in the training room. The moment I saw them, they were already looking over to see why there were a group of visitors at the gym.

After we observed both courts, we went around looking at certain statues and trophies that were on display. One of the ladies was a huge Dee Brown fan, and she would talk about him non-stop. She even took a picture next to his trophies. This raised a couple big questions. For one, I wondered how may an older adult view a player rather than a student his age. There was definitely a huge difference in the reaction to the memorabilia. Most of the adults were pretty amazed by everything they saw, while the 5 students were not as astonished. It was a good experience, but it didn’t make their day like it did with people from the nursing home. A lot of this had to do with the way fans and people perceive the athletes. Being able to see the players everyday on campus is different than someone who never sees them at all. Some of the athletes may be put on pedestals, so to speak. Another big factor that relates to this is character. When we met a few of the players, they were very respectful and polite to the adults. However, I did notice a difference in the way they treated the students from the adults. Almost every player was polite to the adults, while most of the same players wouldn’t even look at the students when saying hello or goodbye. This could have a negative reaction from fans that could contribute to ways the athletes are perceived here on campus.

After we were done looking at the memorabilia, we made are way over to both locker rooms. Here we met a few of the players. I observed how all of the visitors treated the athletes. Most of the adults showed the most interest, while most of the students dazed off. Here on campus, sports are highly advertised, especially basketball and football. This
can lead to someone who lives close by but does not attend school here to idolize these
sports. In this study, the difference between the adults and students’ behaviors was
definitely clear. The adults showed more of a positive attitude, while the students
displayed more of a lackadaisical attitude, showing disinterest while looking like they had
better things to do it, being that it was on a Friday.

For the last 45 minutes, the observation dealt with the players practicing while the
visitors watched above. The players would perform drills, some simple while others more
complex. For the most part shooting was the main drill. The players would take turns
shooting. To their credit, almost every shot went in. Being able to see how well the
players practice and perform was a pleasant surprise to many. While on the top floor, the
visitors watched the players while also meeting a few in the process. They were introduced
to mike Tisdale, a freshmen center standing 7 feet tall. All of the adults were amazed at the
size of this young man. The tour guide emphasized the importance of size and strength and
spoke nothing but appraisals towards his players. This was very important because it left a
positive effect on the adults’ minds, even if what he was saying wasn’t true.

After the observation was over, the reactions and emotions of the adults were first
recorded. All the adults had a great time. It was beneficial to get outside and visit new
places on a nice day. Every adult had a smile on his or her face. Next I recorded the
students’ reactions. For the most part, most of them were just glad to get out of there. It
didn’t seem like many were impressed with the trip, at least compared to the older adults.
This could be related to the way the players are perceived by the people here at this
university. There are many fans on campus, but there are also many who are not. From
this there could be a mixed behavior towards the athletes.
The most important part of the tour was when the lady was mesmerized by the Dee Brown memorabilia. This showed how athletes are looked at when they are successful and popular. Had this player not been as good, she wouldn’t have been this amazed and excited, thus wouldn’t have had such a great time. The other players who were not as popular or familiar were not perceived as highly as someone like Dee Brown. This was a clear demonstration of “big man on campus”.

The other question that I had was why we did not visit another sports complex, like soccer or baseball or any women’s sports? The bias towards football and basketball is unproportional to the number of sports and scholarship athletes that we have here at this university. Why weren’t any women’s sports looked at or interviewed? They work just as hard as everyone else. The tour guide hardly spoke of the women’s basketball team, even though it was a slit gym and they practiced there too. The men’s football and basketball, however, experience the most notoriety. This is due to more advertisement and publicity through television. More of the less recognized sports should have been visited, so that the adults’ reaction could be recorded. The reaction would not have been as positive.

In this observation I was able to distinguish the differences in people’s behaviors towards the athletes. The adults were more enthused than the students, and the athletes were more polite to the adults than the students. These factors can lead to a mixed attitude towards the athletes here on campus.