Senior Gerald Ben is a student, an athlete, and a dedicated practicing Muslim at Oakland University.

The Minnesota native was born in Liberia and said he got involved with soccer because it’s the only sport they have. He said head soccer coach Gary Parson and assistant coach Andy Wagstaff are the reasons he came to Oakland.

“If it wasn't for them, who knows where I would be,” Ben said.

Ben has always played soccer and has played on many different teams, including, Wings FC (club u13-u15), Minnesota Thunder Academy (u16-u18), his high school at Prairie Seeds Academy, North Iowa Area Community College (Junior College),

Westmont College (NAIA) and Michigan Bucks Professional Development League.

“Coming from Liberia I didn’t even have college on my mind. It wasn’t until my second year of high school until I started to think about it,” Ben said.

Ben has been a Muslim his entire life, but did not start seriously practicing the Muslim faith until high school. He said his friends and family interested him in the faith.

“I love Allah and whenever I pray or do anything to praise Allah it makes me feel better as a person,” Ben said.

Ben said his faith does not really coexist with his game, but he tries not to loose sight in his beliefs.

Since living miles away from his hometown in Minnesota, Ben misses his family most.

“I miss my mother and father, my nieces and nephews. They are wonderful. They are getting big now and I’m glad I’ll have more time to spend with them since I’m graduating soon,” Ben said.

Ben went on to say that is doesn't get easier being away from home.

 “It’s never easy. Especially when you go home for the holidays and you get comfortable with not doing anything at all and your mother treating you like you’re in high school again,” Ben said. My mother calls me quite often which helps a lot.”

Outside of school, soccer, and practicing Muslim, Ben enjoys playing FIFA with his teammates.

“I’m the best FIFA player on the team by the way,” Ben said.

Ben wants to work hard and do whatever he needs to in order to lead his team this season.

“Whether it’s scoring goals, assisting, defending, cheerleading which I could improve on. But anything really,” Ben said.

Ben’s goals for this season are to make and win the conference tournament, go back to the NCAA tournament, and make it past where he and his team fell last season.

The men’s soccer team will play Cleveland State Oct. 10 at home.