

# Flawed Thinking

Quitting other sports to focus on lacrosse is shortsighted



**T**o be, or not to be a multi-sport athlete — that is the question. And one choice stands supreme.

High school players focusing exclusively on lacrosse have more time to train and develop skills, right?

Specialists can tailor their strength and conditioning around lacrosse with explosive sprints, middle distance runs and position-specific weight training. They'll be in the best lacrosse-specific shape of their lives, right?

Academically, single-sport students should (in theory) get better grades than their multi-sport peers. Without the daily grind of practice, conditioning and games, they have more time for course work, standardized test preparation and out-of-class tutoring, right?

They also can prioritize recruiting, attend every showcase imaginable, train specifically for these opportunities and not worry about summer or mid-fall scheduling conflicts, right?

This thinking has red-alert flaws when you dig deeper.

It is true that multi-sport athletes have less time for lacrosse-specific training. But the short-term advantages of lacrosse-specific training pale in comparison to the long-term advantages of multi-sport participation. College coaches prioritize potential over polish. They believe multi-sport athletes have barely tapped into their lacrosse potential, while the specialists have already maxed out.

Lacrosse embodies elements of multiple sports.

When you hone one of these traits while competing in sport X, you also improve its acuity in sport Y.

My experience playing quarterback in football and point guard in basketball proved invaluable for playing the "X" attack spot in lacrosse. I learned how to read defenses, identify the vulnerability, move through the right progression and make the correct decision with the ball.

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An incomplete pass or interception in football is as costly as a turnover in lacrosse or basketball. I learned to value the ball.

The benefits of multi-sport participation are not limited to just techniques, either. They also include conditioning, competitiveness and the ability to consistently perform in high-pressure situations.

I think back to my senior year of high school, when a core group of four lacrosse seniors, including me, continued our commitment to basketball while others in our league took the season off to prepare for lacrosse. When spring came, we were in far better shape than our

peers and had 30 competitive games against top-level athletes in pressure-packed situations under our belts.

It's no coincidence that the four of us helped lead the lacrosse team to a championship that spring. You can believe you have the will to get into excellent shape on your own, but there is no replacement for running suicide sprints to end practice with your teammates. That basketball season represents one of my favorites across all sports at any time in my life.

There also are academic benefits to multi-sport participation. Yes, you have less free time, but that trains you to manage that time more efficiently. Otherwise, there's always more time to study, and academic priorities are neglected for immediate enjoyment. During college, I always got better grades during the spring when distraction wasn't an option.

Here's the rub: While college coaches prefer multi-sport athletes and want to see lacrosse players out on the soccer field, they still expect them to compete in offseason recruiting events. To avoid these conflicts, some choose to play lacrosse year-round. That's shortsighted.

With proper time management and communication, you should be able to play in those events without jeopardizing your commitment to other sports. The benefits of multi-sport participation far outweigh the potentially myopic gain created through specialization.

— Ryan Boyle

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