



Champion Coach Note: The Advantage of Multi- Sport Athletes



There is a looming question in youth and high school sports circles about the value of “specialization” in sports. Specialization refers to the practice of focusing a young athlete’s time and energy on a single sport, rather than on multiple sports. Proponents of specialization would argue that it provides the advancement necessary with obtaining attention and college scholarships.

“Nothing is pleasant that is not spiced with variety.

-Francis Bacon

Play Like a Champion firmly believes that specialization, especially at a young age, is detrimental to a child’s development, athletically and socially. Research supports this stance by showing that athletes in most sports do not achieve peak performance until their late teens or twenties, and that specializing can actually hurt an athlete’s development.

Participating in multiple sports develops different muscle systems, and contributes positively to the overall athleticism of a young person. Socially, multi-sport athletes also get to mingle in different groups of people, and learn to adapt to different types of interactions. And if the end goal is professional sports, you don’t have to look far to encounter greatness: Tom Brady, Jim Brown, Deion Sanders, Bo Jackson, Jeff Samardzija, Golden Tate, and many more.

In a recent [Play Like a Champion Today Blog](#), current Notre Dame softball standout, Kathryn

Lux commented on being a multi-sport athlete in high school:

"I found that because I was a multi-sport athlete, I got better grades and was one of the most active and productive athletes in school. Also, I would argue that those who are active in more than one sport are better all-around athletes. By participating in multiple sports, athletes gain the opportunity to learn transferable athletic skills, such as the football player who learns balance and agility from wrestling. This is important because even though a child is not active in the same sport year round, they are still improving their game. Lastly, I would say that an athlete benefits from playing more than one sport because they are members of multiple teams that give them exposure to different coaches with different philosophies, different teammates and personalities, which can provide important benefits for the development of a well-rounded person."

So as a coach, when considering the ramifications of encouraging athletes to specialize in one sport, remember that asking an athlete to focus solely on one activity may not have the desired outcome!