

## A MULTISPORT APPROACH YIELDS GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL

Undoubtedly, the most misperceived notion among high school parents is the value they place on sport specialization. Contrary to mainstream thoughts about creating and maintaining durability, it is not the overexposure to multiple sports that yields injury, rather the absence of sport diversification across multiple seasons that creates vulnerability for them.

Regardless of the level of talent possessed in any given sport, it is the athlete's ability to perform and succeed in other sports that draws more respect and admirable attention to collegiate coaches. Many FBS football coaches, for example, will forgo multiple opportunities to watch a high school football player continuously dominate their competition and instead, wait one more season



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to watch them play basketball — a sport that requires footwork, fitness and hand-eye coordination to be the forefront of their skill-set. It is the diversification of an athlete's skills and their ability to remain healthy throughout the consistent demands of multiple sports that bares the most attention from prospective collegiate programs.

Although collegiate scholarships, academic merit and preferred walk-on offers are the goal for many high school athletes, it is imperative that the interpretation of the journey required to receive the former is not compromised by the fear of a multisport approach.

For perspective, we can examine comprehensive data offered by the NCAA Research Committee that examines the probability of high school athletes continuing to play at the Division 1, 2 and 3 levels, across a spectrum of college sports. As the sports landscape has shifted the past 20 years, the rise of women's sports, the funding of secondary athletic programs, and the rapid influx of competitive lacrosse and hockey programs

### Estimated Probability of Competing in College Athletics

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
<b>Men</b>						
Baseball	487,097	35,460	7.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.9%
Basketball	551,373	18,816	3.4%	1.0%	1.0%	1.4%
Cross Country	270,095	14,270	5.3%	1.8%	1.4%	2.1%
Football	1,036,842	73,557	7.1%	2.8%	1.8%	2.5%
Golf	144,024	8,609	6.0%	2.0%	1.6%	2.3%
Ice Hockey	35,060	4,229	12.1%	4.8%	0.6%	6.6%
Lacrosse	113,313	14,310	12.6%	3.0%	2.4%	7.2%
Soccer	456,362	25,072	5.5%	1.3%	1.5%	2.7%
Swimming	138,935	9,697	7.0%	2.7%	1.1%	3.2%
Tennis	158,151	7,838	5.0%	1.6%	1.0%	2.3%
Track & Field	600,097	28,698	4.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Volleyball	60,976	2,163	3.5%	0.7%	0.6%	2.2%
Water Polo	22,501	1,047	4.7%	2.7%	0.8%	1.2%
Wrestling	245,564	7,239	2.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%
<b>Women</b>						
Basketball	412,407	16,614	4.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.6%
Cross Country	223,518	15,632	7.0%	2.7%	1.7%	2.6%
Field Hockey	59,856	6,103	10.2%	3.0%	1.4%	5.8%
Golf	78,781	5,375	6.8%	2.8%	2.0%	2.1%
Ice Hockey	9,609	2,400	25.0%	8.9%	1.2%	14.9%
Lacrosse	96,904	12,061	12.4%	3.8%	2.7%	6.0%
Soccer	390,482	27,811	7.1%	2.4%	1.9%	2.8%
Softball	367,861	20,316	5.5%	1.7%	1.6%	2.2%
Swimming	175,594	12,848	7.3%	3.3%	1.2%	2.9%
Tennis	190,768	8,608	4.5%	1.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Track & Field	488,592	30,018	6.1%	2.7%	1.5%	1.9%
Volleyball	446,583	17,471	3.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.6%
Water Polo	21,054	1,216	5.8%	3.6%	1.0%	1.1%

Sources: High school figures from the [2017-18 High School Athletics Participation Survey](http://www.ncaa.org/sportscapacity) conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations; data from [club teams](http://www.ncaa.org/sportscapacity) not included. College numbers from the NCAA [2017-18 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](http://www.ncaa.org/sportscapacity).

has yielded more opportunities for a greater number of high school athletes.

With a simple understanding that an increase in visibility yields an increase in opportunity, it is difficult to dispute the multisport approach to promote attention, access and offers at the next level.

Regardless of gender, there is a glaring combination of high school sports that concisely and continuously yields the greatest exposure to collegiate coaches, and, ultimately, provides the most reliable opportunities to progress to the next level. In 2018, 12.1 percent of men and 25 percent of women continued

to play collegiate ice hockey. In parallel, nearly 13 percent of men and more than 12 percent of women advanced their athletic careers in lacrosse. It does not require a mathematician to see the statistical relationship between ice hockey and lacrosse as they relate to collegiate opportunities. For both men and women, adding lacrosse to hockey or hockey to lacrosse will essentially double their rate of exposure to collegiate athletic programs that are eager, able and willing to



► Kenzie Kent (Norwell, Mass.) thrived as a two-sport star at Boston College.

make an offer.

The interpretation of this data is less important than the origin of it. The correlation between ice hockey and lacrosse could be as simple as the similar skills required to play each or as complex as the demographic diversity that exists within each. Nonetheless, the validity of this relationship far supersedes any argument that supports single-sport athletes as the most talented, durable and heavily recruited collegiate athletes. The existence of multisport athletes provides increased exposure, attention and opportunity to high schools, clubs and other organizations that rightfully garner attention toward them.

As in life, two is company and three is a crowd, but one always will be alone. **H**

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Richard T. Gagnon/Getty Images (top); Rob Carr/Getty Images

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