

Sport Specialization

VS.

Multiple Sports



Knowing that it will help him to be his best junior Conner Vallie specializes in baseball. Vallie said that he focuses on baseball in order to give him the advantage over those who play multiple sports. (Courtesy Photo)

Junior specializes in baseball year-round

By Paige Judson
Page Editor

Sometimes to be the best you can be at something, you have to put all of your focus into that one thing.

Junior Conner Vallie, whose passion is baseball, gets that better than most.

"You can't be the best you can be if you are playing other sports," Vallie said.

Whether it is playing or training, Vallie said his schedule is always full of baseball. In addition to playing on a summer team and the high school team, Vallie said he lifts 6-7 times a week and has velocity training 5-6 times a week.

He said he believes that putting all of his focus into one sport will help him be the best he can be.

Vallie added that he believes in the 10,000-hour rule, which was coined by popular psychology writer Malcolm Gladwell. The principle holds that 10,000 hours of deliberate practice are needed to be world-class in any field.

While some people discount the 10,000-hour rule, Vallie has used his focus on baseball to make the Team USA national team, which is strict about recruiting one-sport athletes who put their whole heart into the sport.

"I was on Team USA for our region, and that team focuses on one-sport athletes because they want you to be the best you can be," Vallie said. "I think that focusing on one sport is the best thing to do if you want to be the best you can be."

Even coaches can't agree on which is best

By Paige Judson
Page Editor

When it comes to playing sports, most people go one of two ways.

They put all of their energy and focus into one sport so that they can work their hardest to be the best that they can be. Others decide that they have many interests and don't want to be tied down to one sport.

The big thing that athletes face these days is they think that the only way they will make it is if they specialize in just one sport, and that is not what most college coaches think.

Dan Fishel, the Muskegon Community College track and field and cross country coach does not feel this way.

"After coaching cross country for 16 years and track & field for 10 years, I prefer athletes who compete in multiple sports," he said. "Many studies have shown that athletes that compete in multiple sports have a lower rate of repetitive injuries."

Timothy McGuine, a senior scientist and research coordinator at the University of Wisconsin Health Sports Medicine Center and author of *The American Journal of Sports Medicine* written back in July of 2017 says, "We found that kids who had higher levels of specialization were at about a 50 percent greater risk of having an injury."

That is one of the huge disadvantages of just playing one sport, and one of the main reasons that junior Tommy Cotner plays multiple sports.

"Playing multiple sports helps with overall athletic ability and helps to keep all of your muscles conditioned all year round," said Cotner, who plays football, dives and used to play baseball.

Though playing multiple sports is huge in some sports, some coaches see it a different way, especially when it comes to college coaches.

Rick Rykse, head volleyball coach at Muskegon Community College, said he believes that for an athlete to be her best at a higher level, she should be putting more focus into one sport.

"As kids start to get older and find out which sports they really have a passion for, then often times they need to specialize more and spend more time in just 1-2 sports in order to excel in that sport," Rykse said. "Playing many sports can make them a better rounded athlete, but spending more time in a single sport can help them perform that sport at a higher level."

Studies show that athletes who put more focus into one sport tend to hit earlier peak performance. This means that athletes are able to be on the top of their game while still being an adolescent.

Many disagree with this as being a benefit to being a single sport athlete.

Hope College basketball coach Gregory Mitchell is one of them.

"I've always been a proponent of high school athletes participating in multiple sports," he said. "I think it allows for a more diverse experience and exposes athletes to competitive situations that are unique to that sport."

Shores Athletic Director Ryan Portenga agrees. He said he also believes that it is best for the mental and physical health of the athlete to be playing multiple sports.

"Here at Mona Shores we want athletes," he said. "We don't want a volleyball player or a softball player; we want an athlete in every sport. Studies show it's better for kids health wise and emotionally and mentally, so that's something that we promote, and if you ask any other AD, that is what they will say."

In the end, there are two ways to go. It all depends on the coach and what they think. Rykse said, "So what is the answer? You need both to have a successful program."



While many specialize in one, sport senior Ryleigh Wehler excels at three sports, including volleyball, basketball, and softball. (Softball photo by Isaac Varela, basketball by Christian Fletcher and volleyball by Isaac Varela)

Senior female excels in three varsity sports

By Paige Judson
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When it comes to juggling all of the long practices and late games that come with playing three varsity sports, senior Ryleigh Wehler has it figured out.

"Playing three sports has given me a lot of opportunities to grow as a person and also as an athlete," said Wehler, who recently signed with Aquinas College to play basketball. "I don't think I would be where I am today if I didn't play three sports."

Wehler, who plays volleyball, basketball and softball, said she is dedicated to all three of her crafts striving to be the best she can be at all three sports.

"It's easy to stay in

shape throughout the year," Wehler said.

Though playing three sports definitely helps physically, there are some challenges.

"Sometimes it is hard to always have a sport after school, especially during exam week when practices run long," Wehler said.

Though Wehler said she does see playing three sports as difficult, she has also gotten feedback telling her that it is probably the best thing for her.

"The Aquinas basketball coach told me that he thought it was super cool that I was able to be on varsity for three years of my high school career and excel at all three of them," she said. "He told me that it makes me a better athlete and less likely to get injured."