



How do coaches handle two-sports athletes?

Athletes often choose to play more than one sport. Oftentimes, coaches should be communicating with fellow coaches to help the athlete coordinate schedules. There are benefits and drawbacks to coaching a two-sport athlete. It is important that coaches do not discourage an athlete from participating in more than one sport.

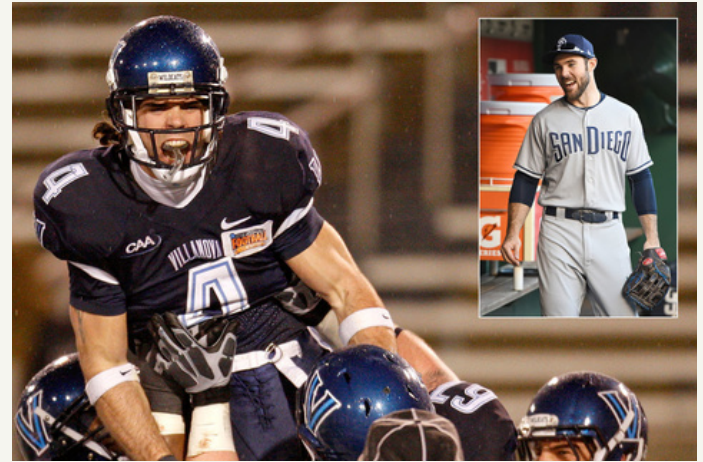
Benefits vs. drawbacks of two-sport athletes

The benefits of coaching a multiple-sport athlete:

- Cross training
- The athlete using different skill sets
- Different ways of thinking in terms of sports, which could include individual vs. team sport
- Perceptual requirements of different sports or developing different types of perceptual abilities.
- The athlete will miss getting reps and opportunities.

The drawbacks of playing multiple sports:

- The athlete has increased risk of burnout
 - Which may include missing practices/workouts for one sport to be at another sport. This can have an impact on how the coach perceives how much playing time an athlete will get.



Coaches can assist in communication process

The athletic department, which consists of the athletic director and coaches, should have a meeting and discuss the philosophy around multiple-sport athletes. Discussing topics in the summer/off season may include who gets priority for workouts. What will the policy be in season? When all coaches are part of this decision, and a conflict arises in season, the athletic department has set the culture for the school and the athlete is not trying to navigate the situation alone.

Setting an athletic policy is important at all schools but perhaps more important at smaller sized schools who have less athletes to pull from.

These precedents are important as one sports season ends and another starts, could a senior leave a fall sport to prepare for a winter sport if the team cannot make the playoffs and give younger players an opportunity to play? The school's policy will provide solutions to these scenarios.





Coaching a multi-sport athlete

Evaluating physical and mental health of athlete

Athletes playing multiple sports going from one sport to the next may experience fatigue, lack of sleep and lack of hydration as they go from one sport to the next. The Ohio High School Athletic Association recommends that athletes take a one-week break between sports. How can coaches evaluate an athlete's physical or mental health?

- Know and understand the athletes on your team.
- Do a preseason analysis of how many two-sport athletes you have and whether the second sport comes before or after your season.
- A coach might need to have a discussion with the athletic trainer to check on how the athlete performed in the other sport and if anything occurred that could affect this sport.
- Does the athlete need additional breaks in play; water breaks; or day off?

Are there differences between male and female two-sport athletes?

The rules are the same for boys and girls. Coaches need to be diligent about performance – not just practice, building strength, flexibility and quickness but from recovery and rehabilitation stand point. It is a mistake if coaches are not doing a proper check on how the athlete is doing physically regardless of gender identity. The last thing a coach wants is for an athlete to have seek medical assistance.

Final tips for coaches

Final tips for athletic directors and coaches in establishing a positive experience for two-sport athletes:

- Athletic director should set specific rules for the department.
- Coaches should work with the training staff to make sure they have medical information available to them.
- Implementing the game plan set forth by athletic director, trainer and coach.
- Coaches should support athletes who want to try another sport. Coaches should be understanding and provide a platform for an athlete to do this. How will those interactions impact the student-athlete.

There are of course unique circumstances. If an athlete is selected to play in an All-Star game, the athlete may miss a practice or game in one sport to play in the All-Star game of another sport. Athletic directors should set department policies for the unique situations as well.

