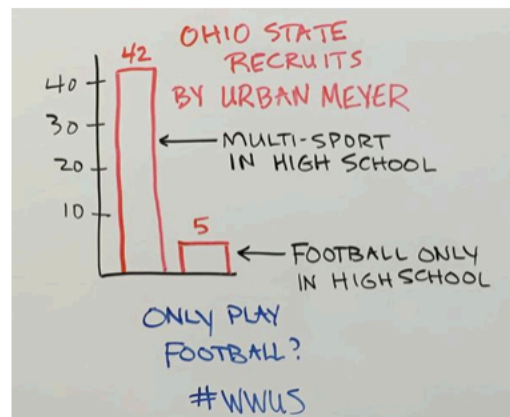


Josh Jenkins, Alex Keath, Mason Cox, Erin Phillips, Ellyse Perry and even Don Bradman are just some of the footballers and athletes who have had a multisport approach throughout their career. Did you know that Don Bradman was the South Australian Squash champion in 1938 and was a scratch golfer and also excelled at tennis, table tennis and billiards?

In 2017 Ohio Varsity tweeted the graph below with the quote: "Sharing this for all you football players who take off the winter/spring to "work out"." Needless to say the tweet went viral and started the frank discussions around specialised vs multi sports approach in adolescents.



So what are the benefits behind giving the opportunity to children to try a variety of sports?

Five reasons to try multi sports during early and adolescent years include:

- 1. Fewer overuse injuries.** Growing bodies can become overstressed by repetition and that stress can lead to injuries. A lack of rest and recovery time in year-round sports exacerbates the problem. Studies show that playing multiple sports leads to better muscle, motor and skill development. It promotes general athleticism, balance, speed and agility.
- 2. Less opportunity for emotional burn-out.** Kids who spend so much time focusing on one sport -- and whose families are similarly solely focused -- risk tiring of the sport all together. Having a variety of experiences keeps things interesting, the monotony of a single sport goes away, and so does that pressure.
- 3. Exposure to different kids.** Football friends will be different from soccer friends, who will be different from the kids in your swimming lessons class. Exposing kids to different sports allows them to share teammate experiences and make memories with a diverse group of peers. It helps them expand their social circle and their opportunities for interaction.
- 4. Exposure to different roles.** By playing different sports you can be exposed to a variety of roles that your coaches may ask you to be a part of during a game. It's an opportunity to broaden their experiences, socially and developmentally. It's an opportunity to become a better competitor and all-around athlete, the kind that coaches value because they are flexible, multi-dimensional, exposed to many situations and coachable.
- 5. Not putting all your eggs in one basket.** Playing only one sport limits your options. An injury, a bad experience with a coach or a reduced role on a more competitive team can bring an abrupt end to an athletic career. Wouldn't you want to experience as many sports as you can while you are young and energetic. Most importantly you are playing with friends and enjoying being fit, healthy and most importantly happy.

Time and time again in my role I ask players what do you like to do outside of football, most of the time the answer is predominantly a blank look and the words "I don't know"! Which is worrying as some of these kids are thinking about football 24 hours a day 7 days a week – what and where is their outlet when the bucket overflows?

By having the opportunity to engage in various sports, athletes are able to develop a breadth of skills transferable to their eventual primary sport whilst also building upon their self esteem and ability to interact with a variety of different people. By having a diverse sports background does not hinder the performance of elite athletes.