



Rooting for Multi-Sport Athletes

Recognizing Our Best

The things we value most are the things we are apt to talk about the most, promote the greatest and recognize the highest.

In Michigan school sports, the “ideal” student-athlete is most often a “multi-sport athlete” – the student who is involved in academic and non-academic programs, athletic and non-athletic activities, who participates in both team and individual sports, perhaps a star in one sport and a substitute in another.

This publication celebrates multi-sport participation in school sports. With only rare exception, the student who participates in multiple school sports and non-athletic activities not only gets the maximum out of his/her years, that student gets the best preparation of life after school.

Between two health epidemics – lack of physical activity leading to obesity on the one hand and, on the other hand, specialization in a single sport year-round that begins too early in life and is too intense and too prolonged, leading to overuse injuries – is multi-sport participation – balanced participation that prepares youth to be more “physically literate,” active and more healthy as adults.

This publication is organic. Hosted on MHSAA.com, it will grow with fresh features and as schools and leagues initiate creative new ways to recognize and promote multi-sport athletes as well as schools with high rates of multi-sport participation.



This is a project of the MHSAA Task Force on Multi-Sport Participation which has been working since 2016 to prepare strategies and specific tactics for the MHSAA, allied organizations and local schools and conferences to promote multi-sport participation by student-athletes.

— John E. “Jack” Roberts
MHSAA Executive Director



The Game Plan



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The Task Force on Multi-Sport Participation is a working group invited by the Michigan High School Athletic Association executive director. Task Force members’ terms are not limited; members drop off when their schedules require and members are added from time to time to maintain diversity of background, geography and expertise.

Current Task Force members:

- Anna Britnell, Canton-Salem
- Todd Cheney, Hartland
- Scott Dane, Grand Ledge
- Keith Guy, Muskegon
- Kevin Guzzo, St. Joseph
- Matt Joseph, Sterling Heights-Utica Ford II
- Jason Kasparian, Port Huron Northern
- Jean LaClair, Bronson
- Anika McEvans, Southfield
- Jason Mellema, Ionia
- Scott Przystas, Grand Haven
- Meg Seng, Ann Arbor-Greenhills
- Jason Stariha, Muskegon-Catholic Central
- Brian Swinehart, Walled Lake Consolidated Schools
- Mike Thayer, Auburn-Bay City Western
- Patti Tibaldi, Traverse City

Multi-Sports = Multi-Success at Bronson

An increasing number of high-profile athletes and coaches are becoming more vocal about the importance of a well-rounded adolescent athletic experience. More and more parents and athletes, so it seems, are heeding that advice.

That's the case in Bronson, a town of fewer than 2,500 residents that manages to keep rolling out successful varsity sports programs. Or perhaps it's that athletes in Bronson never bought into sports specialization as much as other communities in the first place.

Bronson athletic director and Vikings varsity volleyball coach Jean LaClair, who received the Michigan High School Athletic Association's 2015 Women in Sports Leadership Award, said it's critical at a smaller school such as Bronson to emphasize participation in more than one sport.

But, through decades of coaching, she's seen the effects of athletes choosing a narrow focus.

"I think for most schools and most sports, we're seeing our numbers dwindle," she said. "I believe that a lot of parents take their kids to travel ball, and it's taking them out of high school sports. I think club sports are kind of hindering our high school athletics."

The National Collegiate Athletic Association reports that six percent of high school athletes go on to play in NCAA programs,



Just months after a runner-up softball finish in 2015, many of the same student-athletes enjoyed a championship during the volleyball season that fall, including catcher Payton Robinson, below left.

and as of 2012 fewer than two percent of high school athletes earned an NCAA Division I scholarship (of any amount), according to a CBS MoneyWatch report. Fewer than eight percent ever play a varsity sport at any collegiate level, according to a study by ScholarshipStats.com.

It's an admirable dream, but an unlikely one. And along with that gamble comes the great possibility of burnout. Some studies have also suggested that young athletes competing in only one sport year-round are at a higher risk of injury. On top of that, specialization doesn't seem to improve those odds.

"If you want a (college) coach to know about you, just do some work and they'll know about you," LaClair said. "That's how I look at it. If you're good enough, a coach is going to see you. You don't have to go to a club tournament to be seen."

Though participation in multiple sports is commonplace amongst both genders at Bronson, girls sports in particular have reaped the rewards of such commitment.

Look no further than the Vikings' 2015 Division 3 runner-up performance in softball (they lost to Monroe St. Mary Catholic Central in the Final), which seemed to fire up the volleyball squad for the next fall.

Bronson's netters tore through the post-season en route to a Class C volleyball championship that year, earning some revenge by beating Monroe St. Mary Catholic Central in three games.

It was the Vikings second MHSAA title since 2009.

Four athletes who competed on both teams also played basketball: Kelsey Robinson, Adyson Lasky, Kiana Mayer, and Payton Robinson. Alexa Ratkowski, an all-state selection in volleyball, also was on the basketball team.

Of the 13 volleyball players who hoisted a trophy at Kellogg Arena that November, six were two-sport athletes and seven were three-sport athletes.

And of the 11 varsity basketball players on the Vikings' girls roster, eight played volleyball and a total of 10 participated in a fall sport.

As Kelsey Robinson's prep career wound down, she said playing several sports made her better at each one. Not to mention she and her classmates find joy in the memories created through a variety of competitive situations.

"It's just really fun to do different things," said Robinson, a defensive specialist in volleyball, a former cross country runner, a guard in basketball and a third baseman and centerfielder in softball. "We don't have a lot of the numbers, but we have the people who are willing to put in the hard work, even if it's not their best sport. Each season is only three to four months at the most. So it keeps things exciting."

Some do take part in the club scene on a smaller, more local level. Most take advantage of the coaches at Bronson who are generous with their time.

"I'll get into the gym with any kid any time they want to," LaClair said.

— Wes Morgan
Special for MHSAA Second Half

Multi-Sport Efforts Are All Around Us

A Look at Recognition and Promotion Efforts Around the State

The following pages offer a glimpse of efforts to promote and recognize multi-sport efforts in MHSAA schools around Michigan. If your school is undertaking similar initiatives, we'd love to hear from you. Email programs@mhsaa.com to share your ideas and programs.



HONOR ROLL

Adrian

We call it: Iron Maple/Platinum Maple

We celebrate: Three-sport athletes. Every one receives a T-shirt at the end-of-year athletic banquet with his or her name on the back and our Maple logo on the front. Seniors who have been three-sport athletes all four years of high school are awarded the Platinum Maple award. Recipients must be in good standing with all of their teams for the school year and with no athletic discipline or suspensions.

Allendale

We call it: Tri-Sport Award & Outstanding Senior Student-Athlete

We celebrate: Three-sport athletes. All, regardless of grade, are recognized with Tri-Sport awards at the end-of-year banquet. Allendale also names an Outstanding Senior Female Student-Athlete and Outstanding Senior Male Student-Athlete, based on a vote with criteria including "contribution to the entire athletic program."

Alma

We call it: Commitment Award & Triple Threat Award

We celebrate: The Commitment Award is presented to athletes who participate in a sport every season of every year of their high school careers. The Triple Threat Award (new for 2017-18) is intended to recognize senior athletes who participated in at least two sports, hold a grade-point average of 3.5 or higher and have participated in one of Alma's service or honors programs.

Bonus: Multi-sport participation is a major factor in the selection of Athlete of the Month and Athlete of the Year winners. Alma also plans to begin recognizing the team with the highest percentage of multi-sport participants.

Alpena

We call it: Female Athlete of the Year/Male Athlete of the Year

We celebrate: Graduating seniors who have shown excellence in multiple sports over their four years of high school. All head coaches nominate a deserving athlete in their sports, with bios written detailing the athletes' accomplishments. Each head coach then ranks nominees with a point system determining the winners, who are presented with a large trophy that remains on display.

Ann Arbor Greenhills

We call it: Senior Athlete Award

We celebrate: One female and one male senior athlete who have earned the most varsity letters during their high school careers. This has special significance as it is the only athletic award presented by the school.

Belding

We call it: Multi-sport awards & scholarship

We celebrate: Student-athletes who have participated in two sports for four years receive certificates and recognition on stage during the end-of-year athletic program, with plaques awarded to those who have participated in three sports for four years (and in one case a four-sport athlete for four years received a larger plaque). Also, Belding's athletic boosters award a scholarship to a student-athlete who has participated in at least two sports.

Berrien Springs

We call it: Multi-sport Athlete awards

We celebrate: Students who play three or more sports are recognized for their efforts with a T-shirt. Both high school and middle school students are honored.

Bloomfield Hills Roeper

We call it: Iron Athlete Award

We celebrate: Student-athletes who have participated in a sport all 12 seasons of their high school careers.

Bonus: Athlete of the Year, Academic Athlete of the Year and Sportsmanship awards are presented with heavy weight given to athletes with multi-sport experiences.

Byron Center

We call it: BC Triple Threat Award

We celebrate: Seniors who have participated in three sports (one for each season of the school year) for all four years. Honorees do not have to be on varsity all of those 12 seasons. Athletes also must have been passing all classes at semester breaks through all four years. Plaques are presented during the annual senior awards night.

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools

We call it: "Learn. Prepare. Thrive."

We celebrate: Current students who are learning and preparing and graduates who are thriving thanks in part to their

experiences at Plymouth-Canton Community Schools. The district highlights honorees with social media posts produced by its communications department.



Chelsea

We call it: Iron Dog

We celebrate: Three-sport athletes.

Bonus: Chelsea coaches take a retreat each year in part to create a bond that allows for “sharing” of more athletes by creating schedules that eliminate conflicts. Coaches also meet to schedule summer training so there are not conflicts and athletes don’t have to choose between them. Also, summer strength workouts for athletes are organized by groups that are not specific to sport – mixing athletes from different teams together for training.



Chesterfield Austin Catholic

We call it: Scholar Athlete/Scholar Athlete of the Year

We celebrate: Student-athletes who have taken part in at least two sports and carry a 3.5 grade-point average receive a Scholar Athlete award and T-shirt recognizing the honor. From that group, a Scholar Athlete of the Year is chosen.

Comstock

We call it: Triathlete Trip & Colt Commitment Award

We celebrate: Athletes who have participated in sports in the fall, winter and spring are treated to a day trip. Sponsored by the school’s sports boosters, “triathletes” have taken in lunch and a movie, Detroit Tigers games, Fort Custer team-building courses and paintball, Grand Rapids’ Treetops Rope Adventure Course and Michigan’s Adventure. Each honoree receives a T-shirt. Seniors who have played at least nine varsity sports or were triathletes all four years receive the Colt Commitment Award plaque, with smaller plaques given to athletes who are not seniors but have participated all three seasons.



Delton Kellogg

We call it: Graduating with Athletic Honors

We celebrate: Student athletes who accrue points in certain criteria over their high school careers, including for participation, postseason honors, captainships, promotion to varsity from subvarsity, grade-point average, standardized test scores, etc. Ejections, quitting teams and similar lead to a subtraction of points. Honorees are presented with medals to wear over their gowns at graduation.

Jenison

We call it: Triple Threat Award

We celebrate: Athletes who have participated in a sport every season of all four years while at Jenison.

Kent City Algoma Christian

We call it: Knights Order of the Cross

We celebrate: Athletes who have played all three seasons at least twice during their careers. Award nominees will be nominated (beginning in

2017-18) by athletes and school staff based on athletic prowess, dedication to school and family, sportsmanship and community service. Staff will choose finalists for a vote, and winners will be “knighted” at the school’s Senior Awards Banquet with their photos placed on the gym wall.

Livonia Clarenceville

We call it: Three-sport athlete awards

We celebrate: All three-sport athletes, who receive patches and T-shirts at the spring sports banquet.



Macomb Lutheran North

We call it: Three-sport awards & Mustang Sport Award/Distinguished Athlete Award

We celebrate: All athletes who have participated in three seasons of athletics. Each senior who has completed 12 seasons at Lutheran North receives the Mustang Sport Reward, including a trophy. Faculty and staff then vote for a Distinguished Athlete Award winner from the senior class, with multi-sport participation receiving weight.

Bonus: Lutheran North includes how well a

coach promotes other sports as part of its postseason evaluation, and supplies coaches with literature to help them defend multi-sport participation.

Manchester

We call it: Three-season medal

We celebrate: All athletes, varsity and junior varsity, who participated all three seasons of the school year. Honorees cannot have violated the department’s code of conduct.

Marcellus

We call it: Iron Wildcat/Golden Iron Wildcat

We celebrate: Athletes who play all three seasons. They receive a T-shirt at the end of the year, warm-up suits identifying them



as Iron Wildcats, special recognition at a year-end ceremony and plaques at senior awards night. The school’s athletic boosters also sponsor a field trip, which in the past has included visits to Detroit Tigers games, bowling/arcade/go-kart facilities and Michigan’s Adventure. Seniors who participate in all 12 sports seasons of their careers receive the Golden Iron Wildcat Award, including a special plaque and a lifetime pass to all home events at Marcellus.

Middleville-Thornapple Kellogg

We call it: Tri-Sport Awards

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three sports during the school year. Seniors receive personalized plaques, juniors receive gold medals, sophomores silver medals and freshmen bronze medals.

Mt. Morris

We call it: Triple Threat

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in all three seasons during the school

year. Juniors, sophomores and freshmen receive patches and seniors receive T-shirts. If senior compete in all 12 seasons during their careers, they also are awarded a plaque.

Onaway

We call it: Seasonal banquet recognition

We celebrate: Multi-sport participants as part of each end-of-season all-sports banquet to conclude the fall, winter and spring. Onaway has athletes who participate in multiple sports in the same season, and those accomplishments as well as career accolades are acclaimed.

Pellston

We call it: 9 Letter Award

We celebrate: Athletes who earn nine varsity letters, which means they must participate in three sports at least one year. Honorees receive a plaque at Awards Night and are added to another plaque that hangs permanently near the gymnasium.

Petoskey

We call it: Three-sport award

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three sports during a school year. Those students also are highlighted in the local newspaper and on the school’s social media.

Salem

We call it: 3 Sport Athlete

We celebrate: Athletes who compete in three sports, honoring them with a T-shirt that says "3 SPORT ATHLETE" on the back. All honorees also receive individual posts on Salem's Facebook and Twitter accounts highlighting the sports they play, and are treated to a breakfast or lunch hosted by the athletic department in June. Athletes who play four sports during a school year receive a hooded sweatshirt.

St. Joseph

We call it: Iron Bears

We celebrate: A program called the "Iron Bear" Club at our school rewards those who are three-sport athletes. Students who are three-sport athletes receive and "Iron Bear" shirt and we celebrate them on social media.



St. Johns

We call it: 12-Season Participation Award

We celebrate: Athletes who have participated in all three sports seasons all four years of high school.

Bonus: To further encourage multi-sport experiences, St Johns has made its participation fee annual instead of per season hoping students will participate in many sports for one price.

Schoolcraft

We call it: Iron Eagle/Triple Threat/Eagle Pride

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three sports, to escalating degrees. All three-sport athletes are honored with Triple Threat awards. Those who play three varsity sports during one school year receive Eagle Pride awards. Students who play three sports all four years of high school are awarded the Iron Eagle.



Scottville Mason County Central

We call it: 3-Sport Spartan

We celebrate: Three-sport athletes, who receive an annually-designed T-shirt during the spring awards assembly.

Southgate Anderson

We call it: 3-sport patches

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three varsity sports during one school year.

Vassar

We call it: 3-sport photo display

We celebrate: Athletes who participated in three sports either the previous school year or all four years of their careers. Photos of those athletes are displayed above the showcase at the main entrance to the school.

Warren DeLaSalle

We call it: Ironman

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three sports during one school year. Honorees receive a letter and T-shirt that lists each of the 13 sports DeLaSalle sponsors. Ironman winners and their coaches also are treated to a breakfast by the school.

Wayland

We call it: 3-sport career blanket

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three sports for all four years, regardless of level (varsity, JV or freshman). They receive a blanket in school colors displaying their name, graduation year and sports they've played stitched into the blanket, which is presented at the senior awards ceremony.



West Branch Ogemaw Heights

We call it: 12-sport plaque

We celebrate: Athletes who have participated in 12 sports over their high school careers. They receive an engraved plaque at the senior awards ceremony.

Bonus: Ogemaw Heights coaches promote the multi-sport experience by attending their athletes' competitions in other sports to show support.

Westland John Glenn

We call it: Multi-Sport Athlete award

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in multiple

sports throughout one school year. Students who do so receive a Multi-Sport Athlete shirt, and those shirts also are given to teachers, secretaries and custodians to help promote the message of the multi-sport experience.

Bonus: John Glenn also has started a leadership group made up of captains and other athletic leaders who are charged in part with promoting a multi-sport experience by influencing their peers.



Wyoming

We call it: Triple Threat award

We celebrate: Athletes who have participated in three sports all four years of high school. They are recognized on a plaque that is displayed in a main hallway.

LEAGUE OF LEADERS

Blue Water Area Conference

Lineup: 8 schools located near Port Huron and the thumb region.

We call it: 3-sport varsity patch

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three varsity sports during a school year.

Cascades Conference

Lineup: 8 schools located near and surrounding Jackson.

We call it: Scholar-Athlete Award

We celebrate: Students who have played at least two sports for three years, including senior year, while carrying at least a 3.4 grade-point average. These athletes are honored at a league-wide banquet.

Downriver League

Lineup: 10 schools located on the southeast side of the Detroit area near the Detroit River.

We call it: 3-sport varsity patch

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three varsity sports during a school year.

Kensington Lakes Activities Association

Lineup: 14 schools located mostly north and east of the Ann Arbor area.

We call it: 3-sport varsity patch

We celebrate: Athletes who participate in three varsity sports during a school year. Athletes also must remain academically eligible throughout the entire three seasons and complete all three in good standing. After a first patch is awarded, chevrons are awarded for additional years of achievement.

Whatever the Season, White Was There

Seeking a higher level of performance, many high school athletes have channeled their energy to one sport.

Many refer to this concentration as specialization – and Cody White, for one, wasn't buying it.

White, a Walled Lake Western, was a three-sport athlete and he loved every minute of it. He played basketball during the winter, baseball in the spring and football in the fall. During the summer he competed in AAU basketball, travel baseball, 7-on-7 football games with his Western teammates, and he participated in a few summer football camps.

According to Western football coach Mike Zdebski, that isn't the case at his school.

"We encourage them to play more than one sport," Zdebski said. "For one, we want them to get their money's worth. We have a pay-to-play policy of \$425. You play one sport and it costs \$425. You play three sports and it costs the same. And, two, playing other sports helps them develop other skills. In basketball you create space. In baseball you chase fly balls, and that helps with depth perception. Besides you get to work with other coaches and other teams.

"We're lifting weights during the summer. If a kid is playing summer baseball or AAU

basketball, if they have time they can come by and lift weights. And what we always tell them, if you're tired let us know. You can take a break."

Zdebski was quick to point out some excellent athletes in the past, like former Kansas City Royals outfielder/Oakland Raiders running back Bo Jackson, who were multiple-sport athletes. And, more recently, there's Luke Glendenning of the Detroit Red Wings. Glendenning was an all-state running back at East Grand Rapids.

White just completed his freshman season at Michigan State, where he earned Big Ten Network All-Freshman Team honors while playing in every game as a receiver. At 6-foot-3 and 200 pounds, White played receiver, defensive back and also returned kicks during high school, and played a big role in Western's run to the 2015 Division 2 Semifinals.

During baseball season, White pitched and plays middle infield and right field. He played the wing and shooting guard in basketball.

His interest in playing a variety of sports came at an early age and, as is the case with most children, a family member was the one who introduced White to athletics. Former NFL player and Detroit Lions executive Sheldon White is his father, but the first sport White played, at age 3, was baseball. Two years later he began playing football and basketball.

Sheldon White also played three sports at his high school in Dayton, Ohio, (Meadowdale High) and helped his son manage his busy schedule.

"Growing up was a little different (for me) than the usual kid," Cody White said. "Going to Lions games and just being around football all the time. I think I love the game more because I was around it so much.

"But I think playing three sports helped me, too. The twisting of your hips in baseball, when you swing the bat, you're using different muscles. And all the jumping you do in basketball. You have to move in tight spaces.

"With football, you're with the football guys. By doing all three you meet different people."

Playing multiple sports has definitely been the right road for White to follow. And his busy schedule hasn't hindered his work in the classroom.

White has a 3.54 grade-point average pending his grades for this semester.



If Cody White seemed like a blur on the fields and court to Walled Lake Western opponents during his career, his busy year-round schedule must have had his family's head spinning as well.

White played these same sports all throughout high school. His freshman year he competed in track and field, along with baseball. White hadn't ruled out returning to track and field, in addition to baseball, as a senior.

It's a hectic schedule but, again, White wouldn't have had it any other way.

"I couldn't see myself not competing in those sports," he said. "I love them so much. I wanted to finish my senior year playing all three."

White estimated that he had two days off, away from sports, in June. In July he'd take a week off, between his summer baseball team schedule ending and the start of football practice.

There's no question White was driven, but it's more than that. In some high schools, and with some coaches, playing multiple sports can be a challenge. There are some coaches who would prefer the students to play one sport and only one sport.



— Tom Markowski

Special for MHSAA Second Half