



ATHLETIC UPDATE

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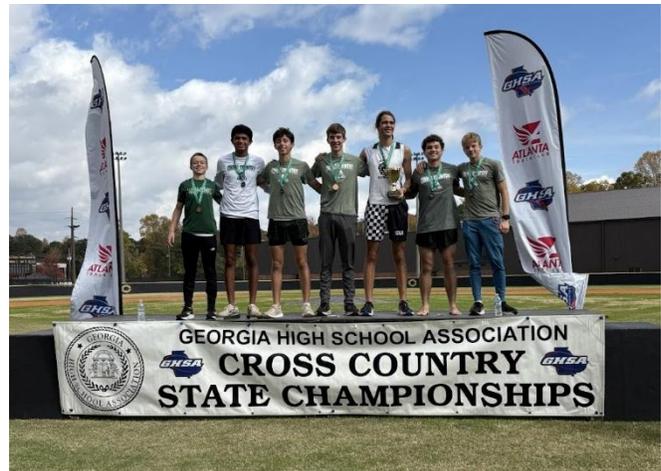
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November 13, 2025

The fall athletic season is coming to an end, but we're not finished yet! To date, the Spartans have won region championships in three of the five competitive fall sports the school offers. The cross country teams each won the program's seventh consecutive championship while the football team won back-to-back region titles. The volleyball team earned a spot in the state playoffs and advanced to the second round before losing to the eventual state champion, The Lovett School. The flag football team is still competing and hoping it will also earn a state playoff berth.

The cross country teams competed in the Class ADI-3A Private state meet this past Saturday in Carrollton with the boys earning a podium spot by placing fourth and the girls placed fifth. Top Five finishes for both teams is quite impressive considering we are competing against some of the top cross country teams in the state.

Congratulations to Coach Geoffrey Walton, who will retire at the end of the school year, for 31 amazing years working with the school's runners! He's led teams to many region and state titles and helped develop a long list of college runners. Thank you, Coach Walton!



The football team once again will be dealing with a four-week break from the last game played to the team's playoff game, which is November 21. For those of you wondering how this can happen, well it's a very unfortunate situation, but I'll do my best: the Spartans had a "region" bye the last week of the regular season; then the GHSA mandated a "week off" for all playoff teams in the state; finally, because of the team's success and high seed placement, the Spartans earned another "first round bye." So, while we will play our first playoff game Friday, November 21, at home, it is actually the second round of the playoffs. Who will we play? That will be determined this Friday when Holy Innocents hosts Mt. Paran with the Spartans hosting the winner the following Friday.

For the state playoff game on November 21, the admission fee is \$12 and tickets will be sold only using GoFan—no cash will be accepted for admission! Students and other pass holders will be required to purchase a ticket as well. GHSA coaches' passes will be honored.

At Athens Academy, the success of our athletic programs is tied to multi-sport athlete participation. We are too small a school for athletes to specialize in one sport for several reasons; we don't have enough students to fill rosters without athletes playing several sports and we need our best athletes playing on other teams. Below is an article published in the Fall 2025 Interscholastic Athletic Administration magazine that I think you'll enjoy.

Multi-Sport Athletes and College Recruiting

November 6, 2025

By: Chuck Shore, Athletic Director, Retired, Gladstone High School (VA)

During a recent discussion with friends and former colleagues of mine, the topic of multisport athletes and college recruiting came up. I was asked to share my own experience with these common issues in high school sports. In addition to expressing my own opinions and experience, I thought I should also delve into what some of the research indicates. There are differing perspectives on whether athletes should specialize in sports or experience multiple sports on their journey through high school and potentially pursuit of an athletic scholarship beyond high school. There are many beliefs, myths, and factors, that will be addressed based on my experiences and research.

Many coaches, parents, and athletes believe that the only, or best, path to getting a college scholarship and playing a sport in college is by focusing on only one sport. There is a case that can be made for sports specialization. That is not what my experience has shown when talking to college coaches. It is also not what is shown in the research to be explored later.

College coaches are highly supportive of multiple sport athletes, according to a USA Today High School Sports article. Conversations my daughter, wife and I had with coaches found that college coaches highly supported more well-rounded athletes. Legendary women's softball coach, Sue Enquist, told me in a conversation at a CSADA conference, she was tired of travel coaches, and some high school coaches, putting words into college coaches' mouths. She was advocating a program to create a direct relationship between high school and college coaches to avoid this misrepresentation.

One myth is the belief that you will be better by playing only one sport. The research indicates that you will only peak earlier because the focused time and attention. More elite athletes participated in multiple sports growing up. A study of elite NFL players revealed that most first-round draft picks were multi-sport athletes. The conclusion was that single-sport football participation in high school does not appear to aid athletes in reaching or succeeding in the NFL. However, another study of NBA players indicated only a minority of them participated in multiple high school sports. This study reveals of those NBA players who participated in multiple sports participated in more games, experienced fewer major injuries, and had longer careers than those who participated in a single sport.

There is an abundance of research that shows a higher level of athletic development and fewer injuries for those that participate in multiple sports. The previously mentioned study of NBA players is one of them. Another study shows that early sport specialization in females is associated with increased risk of anterior knee-pain disorders. A large study conducted by the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health supports this by revealing a higher injury rate for athletes specializing in one sport.

An article published by Functional Movement concludes that encouraging students to play multiple sports has the potential to improve movement quality, limit overuse and increase athletic capacity. A case study published by the National Strength and Conditioning Association concludes that youth who play multiple sports tend to be healthier, become better athletes, and have a lot more fun.

The mental aspect is also an issue with single sport athletes. The USA Today High School Sports article previously noted mentions this.¹ This concept is also backed by the Functional Movement article.⁸ My own observations include witnessing the intense pressure that parents and coaches, primarily club/travel coaches, placed on student-athletes so they perform at a high-level. Unfortunately, I have also observed the student-athletes get to the point they no longer wanted to play the sport or pursue a college sports scholarship due to the pressure. They wanted to do something else, focus on school, were afraid of failure, were afraid of living up to their expected standards, or for some other reason. I have witnessed many students jumping from travel/club team to team to find the one that was going to get them where

they wanted to go just to settle for sitting a bench, not making a team, or washing out. Unfortunately, I have also witnessed multiple athletes avoid playing multiple high school sports because they heard or feared a coach would not let them play their favorite sport. The real loss is for the student that could become a better, more rounded athlete and avoid burnout.

A misconception of many student-athlete and their parents is that the high school is responsible for helping obtain a college scholarship. The truth is, any help along those lines provided by the high school staff is only a blessing. The ultimate responsibility and effort are with the student-athlete and their family. High school coaches and athletic departments don't have all the time and resources to make this happen. High schools have a role by guiding your coaches and families to academic and sports recruiting resources. My daughter obtained assistance from a large college recruiting program that came through with their promises. My daughter was a two-sport athlete and the program cost money. We had them take care of one sport, my daughter's first choice of sport, while we worked on her second sport. Trying to model after the programs first sport process, we applied those strategies to the second sport. It was long, pain-staking research. We identified schools that carried her preferred major, were in a location she liked, she would stay at through graduation even if not playing, had graduating seniors at her position, among other factors. Then, contacting those schools through email and sometimes phone for the higher priority schools. We could not keep up with the volume of contact that the recruiting program was doing in her first sport. Even then, there were follow-up emails and phone calls for both sports that is solely the responsibility of the student. It was a tremendous task. I could not imagine a high school coach, athletic director and sports program beginning to do all of that for all its potential college student-athletes.

As an Athletic Director, it is our responsibility to promote and educate our coaches and student-athletes. Remember you are an educator of high school coaches and students. Advocate for them to expand their experiences and talents and help their development as athletes, students, and individuals. Prioritize academic success during and beyond high school. Help develop players as all around people and athletes. Help your coaches understand the importance of that and their own programs may reap the benefits of multi-sport athletes.

Here is a link to view the participation numbers of high school athletics in the United States:

[2024-25 High School Athletics Participation Survey Results](#)

Go Spartans!

