



No such thing as too many sports

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WAUKESHA — The three-sport athlete at the high school level has grown less and less prevalent as the years go by.

Whether that be due to the time commitment it requires, pressure from parents or coaches, the emergence of club sports and travel teams, or simply by choice, student-athletes aren't as keen on playing a sport for their respective high schools year-round.

For Catholic Memorial junior Sean Nicholas, forget about playing three sports. Or even four sports.

Try five sports. Cross country. Football. Soccer. Basketball. Track and field. Of the 12 WIAA-sanctioned sports offered at CMH, Nicholas is in nearly half of them.

"One of my classmates asked me, 'Sean, when do you have time to have fun?'" Nicholas said. "I said, 'This is my fun. I love to compete.'" Nicholas has to consider his hectic schedule. Here's what that typically looks like: On Monday, he'll attend soccer practice at 3:30 p.m. for his "easy" day. Before school on Tuesday, Nicholas will run a couple miles for his cross country training, attend school, have football practice from 3:30-4:30, then go watch the JV soccer team play prior to his match. Wednesday, it's more running in the morning followed by football practice (3:30-4:30) and soccer practice (6:00-8:00), and Thursday, Nicholas once again runs on his own before school and then either plays in a soccer match or practices for coach John Bisswurm.

"Football usually does walkthroughs so I don't need to come in (Thursday)," Nicholas said. "Friday gets a little nuts. I'll go to soccer practice from 3:30-5, immediately get on the bus to go to the football game to go kick, come back to CMH around 10:30, then go home and go to bed."

That's not where it ends. Saturdays are usually reserved for cross country meets, so he'll roll out of bed and lace up his running

See **NICHOLAS**, PAGE 4B Track and Field Championships in La Crosse.



Catholic Memorial's Sean Nicholas (center) gets in a practice run with his 4x800-meter relay teammates on June 24, 2021 prior to the WIAA State

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shoes. Nicholas even recalled a frantic stretch from Sept. 17-18 where he kicked for the football team, ran in a cross country meet and then suited up for a soccer match against Kettle Moraine Lutheran.

"I had a soccer game at 11 a.m. and also had a cross country meet at 10 a.m. for varsity," Nicholas said. "I talked to (CMH cross country coach Elliot Kramsky) and he said if I wanted to I could run with the JV team at 9 a.m., so I was able to run with the JV team and then be in the car and go to the soccer game and get there for warmups and play."

Certainly, it's not unheard of for one to play two sports in a particular season. Over the years, it's become commonplace for football teams to "borrow" a soccer player to help in the kicking department.

Then in the spring, there have been several examples of students playing two sports. For instance, back in 2019, both Johnny Kelliher and Chimere Dike of Waukesha North played in a regional baseball game, then drove up to La Crosse to compete at the state track and field meet the very next day. Dike and Kelliher also played football and basketball, making them four-sport athletes.

But Nicholas is currently participating in three fall sports at once between football, soccer and cross country.

"He's the first kid that we've ever had do three sports in a fall season," said Matt Bergan, the athletic director and special teams coach for the football team at CMH. "He's also a role player on the basketball team and he's also one of our best track athletes, so this is a legitimate five-sport athlete, which you basically never hear of and he's just been awesome for us."

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Not only does the 5-foot-11 Nicholas play five sports, but he's a key contributor in nearly all of them.

He was the top performer for the CMH boys cross country team on Aug. 27 at the Glenn Herold Invitational — one day after he was responsible for six points as the place kicker in the Crusaders' 31-14 victory over Marquette. In soccer, he's a team captain along with seniors Leo Seidel and Dylan Morawski, and also plays with senior Ryan Brophy, who handles kickoffs for the football team.

But Nicholas has taken it all in stride and embraced his role for each team.

"Something I've really liked is the camaraderie of my teammates in all the sports," Nicholas said. "For cross country, football and soccer, it's a different group of guys and I have fun with all the guys on each team. I also like how I have a central role but I'm not the Kyle Giricz or the Corey Smith. I play a lot of minutes, I kick and get points and I'm the No. 4 runner on the cross country team, but I'm not there to fill the big shoes. I'm there to do my job and be part of the team."

Nicholas has also made two appearances in La Crosse for the WIAA State Track and Field Championships and nearly came away with gold as a freshman in 2021, when he was a member of the runner-up 4x800-meter relay team. Also on that team were his older twin brothers, Chris and Michael, as they were instrumental in running a time of 8 minutes, 11.66 seconds — just 63 one-hundredths off the winning mark.

"I was with them my freshman and sophomore year and they had a big influence on me," Nicholas said. "Along with my dad they helped teach me work ethic and influenced my ambition that I have to do all the things I can do."

Along with his now-graduated older brothers, Nicholas also gave credit to then-senior Gavin Calteux, the first leg of CMH's second-place 4x8 relay.

"It was a very meaningful experience I had freshman year going to state with my twin brothers and Gavin Calteux," Nicholas said. "Something I'll always remember and treasure was Gavin's leadership."

This past spring, Nicholas qualified for state in two events as a sophomore, helping the Crusaders make the finals in the 4x400 and reprising his role in the 4x8 team. It was earlier this year when Bergan, also an assistant with the track and field team, presented Nicholas with the option to kick for the football team.

"Freshman year I played football — I was on freshman team," Nicholas said. "I was the backup quarterback. I wasn't all that good, but I was good at kicking. After the track season I had wanted to try cross country but I was also getting a little pressure from my older brothers to play soccer. I had played club soccer in the spring, so I talked it over my sophomore year with (Kramsky). I was able to do cross country and soccer last year. Matt Bergan talked to me one day and asked if I'd be interested in (kicking). I showed up to some practices and here I am now."

In his first year suiting up for the varsity football team, Nicholas has excelled, making 30 of his 31 extra-point attempts and also knocking home a 30-yard field goal against the Hilltoppers.

"We talk about giving kids a great student experience at Memorial and we think it's a pretty neat thing that Sean can go from football practice from 2:30-3:30, he can go to soccer practice from 3:30-5 and still get in his cross country workouts on top of keeping a 4.0 grade-point average," Bergan said.

Nicholas knows the importance of academics and gets in his school work whenever he can, whether it be after practice or games, during study hall or free time in class.

"Generally I can keep straight As. That's the goal again for this semester," Nicholas said. "I get a lot of good support from my coaches and teammates. Without them it would be really hard to do all the sports I can do."

While Nicholas has yet to see minutes for the varsity basketball team, it's still one of his favorite sports and helps keep him in shape for track season. The plan is to hoop it up once again this winter before embarking on his fifth sport of the school year in the spring.

"It does take a lot of balance but I think when you look back on student experience, Sean's going to look back (with) his family and say, 'Wow, I'm really glad I got to experience all that stuff in my time at high school.' It's great memories for that kid," Bergan said.



Catholic Memorial junior Sean Nicholas holds up one finger signifying his victory in the 800-meter run during an indoor track and field competition on March 17, 2022 hosted by UW Oshkosh.

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