

Ben Miller: Three sports and no regrets

By Ben Miller, Jordan High School



I was able to hold back tears through the final seconds, the team handshakes, and Coach Barbour's final address to the team, but when my Dad approached me on the field after my final time wearing a football helmet, I could no longer control them. Through an embrace that felt like hours, my father and I reminisced in silence about an entire era – one that, in spite of my commitment to play baseball at the University of Pennsylvania, was coming to an end. However, it had not ended yet.

The playoff loss marked more than the end of my football career – it meant the start of my final basketball season and attending the

basketball scrimmage the next morning. Beginning at a young age, I would play one sport in anticipation of the next. I was never upset at the end of a season because that only meant the exciting start of a new one. As a rising freshman I had far-fetched goals and fantasies, some that I was able to achieve and others that I was not, but as a 14 year old, my main wish for the future was to have no regrets.

Throughout my time in high school, my athletics career, and in making my college decision, I had that one idea in mind. Not everything went as planned, but in retrospect I achieved my ultimate goal.

Modern day athletics at the youth level are much different than they used to be. My generation is the first to emphasize specialty at a young age. As a three-sport high school athlete, I was fortunate to avoid this trend. Playing three sports for Jordan High School has been beneficial in many ways, with the greatest being the development of myself as an all-around athlete. However, I must admit that I have sacrificed many opportunities in order to play football and basketball. Fall baseball is a great exposure opportunity for young men trying to play ball in college. Teams travel around the country during the fall months just as they would during the summer. Unfortunately, I realized through experience that participating in a Thursday-Sunday tournament in Georgia was unrealistic as the starting quarterback for my high school's football team. I was willing to forfeit the experience of showcase baseball for that of Friday night lights, a decision that I hope nobody will fault me for making.

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Lots of people acknowledge my accomplishments and applaud my performances but most are unaware of what my day-to-day life entails. I have [challenged myself in school](#), focusing on math and science. Not only are those my favorite subjects, but they also enable me to take difficult classes while playing three sports. For example, Calculus may consist of difficult topics to grasp, but it does not require 20 pages of textbook reading every night. A difficult day for me would consist of basketball practice before school, baseball practice after school, and a workout late at night. An easier day would be football practice after school followed by a workout. I do my best to complete my school work in class, but I stay up late if I must to ensure that everything gets done. People often ask how I deal with the physical and mental stress but I find it manageable. I enjoy most moments throughout my day and that is all I could ever ask for.

The recruiting process is an intricate beast that I certainly have not figured out. If I have learned anything from my long struggle with college coaches, it is that they must do what is best for them. I have been fortunate to experience recruitment in both football and baseball. I found the differences between the two to be both profound and interesting. First of all, football coaches seem to be more liberal with their scholarship offers. The most obvious reason for this is that the NCAA allows Division I football programs 85 scholarships for a team, while allowing Division I baseball programs only 11.7. Secondly, an

astounding amount of the football process takes place on social media. Most of the initial contact I had with football coaches came through direct message on Twitter. In contrast, I always spoke with baseball coaches on the phone. The reason for these differences seemed to be the larger demands of football programs. The coaches did not have as much time to spend on an individual guy, especially a random no-star QB like me.

One of the biggest lessons I learned was on the topic of prospect camps. I only attended baseball camps, so I cannot speak on other sports. Camps are great tools for the coaches to find recruits, however I learned that contact with a coach prior to attending his camp is essential. Time and money spent at a camp should be used impressing a coach who is already familiar with you, rather than trying to distinguish yourself and just being recognized as a potential recruit.

Scotland vs JordanFB

Ben Miller (12) of Jordan. Scotland defeated Jordan 26-25 in the first round of the 2018 4A NCHSAA football state playoffs. (Photo by: Jerrell Jordan)

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In hindsight, my biggest mistake was falling in love with a school before I received an offer. Several times throughout the process I visited a campus, spoke with the coaches, and made up my mind that that was where I wanted to be. Unfortunately, those decisions proved to be premature. However, things worked out for me and I eventually

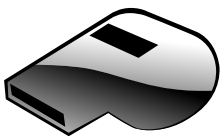
found a school that loved me back. My commitment to play baseball at UPENN is my greatest achievement in life. When making my final decision I had the same thing on my mind that I always do -- have no regrets. No matter how I played out the situation in my head, I would regret passing up the opportunity to attend an Ivy League school. I am confident that I made the right choice.

Growing up and playing sports in Durham has been a fantastic experience. I am most appreciative of the teammates I have had and the coaches I have played under. I have met so many incredible people that I never would have crossed paths with had I not gone to public school in Durham. With the rich history of Durham high school sports, acceptance and support of Durhamites is very hard to come by. One of the first lessons I learned was to avoid reading local media message boards. However, I have felt nothing but love from the majority of the community since my debut in a Jordan uniform in August 2015. I was incredibly proud of Durham when the Jordan and Riverside football programs were crowned co-champions of the Triangle-6 conference over our more privileged Wake County rivals. The amount of progress we both have made since my freshman year is unbelievable. Although I will no longer be a part of it, I wish for the continued success of all Durham programs in the future.

As my time as a multi-sport athlete comes to an end, I am left with only my memories. All of the hard work and emotion that goes into a season cannot live on in a trophy or picture, but will remain in my heart. I have no doubt that my best days are still on the horizon, but the sun setting on my childhood marks the end of a large portion of my life. More so than simply moving out and gaining independence, going to college represents a loss of a part of me that I dread living

without. I look forward to focusing on baseball and reaping the benefits of an entire year of practice in the spring. However, I already know the autumn breeze will bring nostalgic feelings of running through a banner on Friday nights. I am thankful to everyone in North Carolina who has contributed to my joyous experiences, and I look forward to embracing the role of loyal spectator in the future.

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