

GO TIME



POP! Straight into the end zone at the Drake vs. Drake championship game, Westin Brees (7) catches a deep throw. "It was really needed for the yellow team," Brees said. "I was surprised that I caught it, and that made me feel really good." Brees was not the only one surprised that he caught the ball; so was Carter Vap (6). "I felt a rush of adrenaline trying to catch the ball. I was really surprised and frustrated that I didn't because I wanted black team to win and not yellow. Even though I know I made a good effort afterwards," Vap said.

MY FAVORITE PART OF VOLLEYBALL IS...



"My favorite part is probably playing games with other people in scrimmages."
-Kate Schillie (6)



"It's really fun. I like being on the team with my friends."
-Olivia Denno (6)



"One time I hit the ball and it flung across the room into the basketball hoop. It was really cool."
-Mya Mullen (7)



"I really like the people and playing with them because they're really nice."
-Isabelle Dillon (8)

FROM ZERO TO HERO At the Three Creeks school gym in early December, Bailey Chiappetta (8) and Isabelle Hildebrand (7) celebrate a spike point against the opponent. Despite a missing player, they still managed to have fun. "I was so excited because we scored a really good point, and we were losing, so every point was super exciting," Hildebrand said.



Dragons share their school sport experiences, triumphs, even a few mishaps, and apply lessons to life.

Story by Corrine Stratton

School was a lot. There was the hustle and bustle of clubs, hobbies, friends, and LOTS of homework, and in the midst of all this were sports. From cross-country, to flag football and volleyball, sports, while adding to an already busy schedule, added to the middle school experience.

First there was a dream. A goal. "I joined cross-country because I wanted to strengthen my legs. I also have a natural duck-foot, and I wanted to correct that," Charlotte Simmons (6) said.

Sometimes it was just for fun. Flag football player Clayton Lambrecht (7) said, "I joined football because my friends were in it, and it was another way to have fun."

Molly Flynn (7) joined volleyball for her friend. "My friend wanted to play and wanted someone to play with," Flynn said.

Once the season began, so did the work. Practices looked similar across the sports: warm ups, stretches, fundamentals practice, conditioning, and scrimmages.

In the end, their work certainly paid off. Cross-country runner Gavin Snyder (8) placed 15th out of over 100 runners in the

league meet. The flag football team made the playoffs without a single defeat. "We were undefeated 'til the playoffs in the semi-finals, when we lost by one touchdown. One game was 72 to 20," Lambrecht said.

Sometimes though, the good time was what really counted. "We weren't very good," Flynn said about her volleyball team. "The games were not usually in our direction, but we had lots of fun."

For Van Johnson though, as weeks of work led up to the league cross-country meet, sickness struck. "In the morning I felt kinda' awful, so I just rested. I started to feel better, so I went to school, but by the time I got to the race, I felt like I was going to throw up," Johnson said. "I still decided to race because I needed to be there for my teammates. My parents asked if I wanted to pull out, but I said, 'No, I'm going to finish this race.'"

Sometimes life was a lot, but for these competitors, sports taught them how to handle it. "You just gotta' go. Keep moving," Simmons said.



BETTER THAN EVER

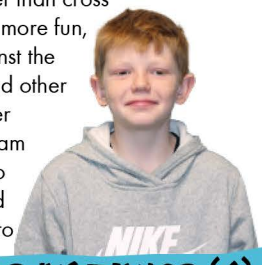
Which is better? Participants debate the better sport.

"Cross country is better than football because you're not on a team, so you can push yourself and have goals and compete against yourself. It's also more impressive because it's way harder than just throwing a ball around."



MAYA JETTEN (6)

"Flag football is better than cross country because it is more fun, and we played against the other Drake team and other teams. And it's harder depending on the team because you have to play hard teams and come up with ways to beat them."



RHYS TAYLOR (6)

FULL STRIDE It's cross country practice at Van Bibber Park, and Charlotte Simmons (6) barrels down the hill to catch up with her team. "I really liked being part of a team because I've only ever done non-competitive sports. I liked the camaraderie," Simmons said. She worked hard, and, in the end, it paid off. "I am able to run a lot faster and a lot further now, and I improved my mile time by nearly a minute and a half."

HIT IT LIKE IT'S HOT! At a volleyball game against Three Creeks K-12 team, Isabelle Dillon (8) hits the ball over the net and scores a point for the Dragon team. "It felt good to get it over the net," Dillon said. The team did not win the game, but they fought until the end.

HIKE! Running to score a touchdown, yellow team quarterback Luca Vlassis-Lowe (6) runs the ball. "I hiked the ball and looked for someone to pass to, but no one was open, so I just ran," Vlassis-Lowe said.

IN STRIDE. At the league cross country meet, Amelia Choate (6) works to pass another runner. "I really loved doing cross country this year. It's really intense, but it's awesome to hear all your teammates cheering you on right at the end," Choate said.