



BATTING BASEBALLS Juniors Nick Utley and Kalon Zandbergs play on both the baseball and football team

SLIDING to the ENDZONE

Daniel Stenzel | El Estoque Photo Illustration

Baseball players participate in football with coach's encouragement to play a second sport

by **Christine Chang**
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Tackling buff masses of padded athletes and throwing spirals does not have much in common with pitching fastballs and sliding on home plates. Unlike the pairing of water polo and swimming, baseball and football are completely unrelated sports. Yet many baseball players who are sprinting around baseball diamonds this spring will be found catching passes next football season.

An avid baseball player since elementary school, junior Kalon Zandbergs decided to devote an entire season in the fall to football for the first time last year along with his regular baseball season this spring. From his experiences, football was anything but easy.

"Baseball is a bit of a lazier sport, while football requires a lot more endurance,"

Zandbergs said. "It's a lot of work, but it was worth it and we had a really good winning season."

Since it was his first year on the team, Zandbergs' previous experience included only football matches with his friends. Because of the team policy that all upperclassmen must play on varsity, Zandbergs found the greatest challenge in training himself to be constantly aware of the team's strategies and coordination required to win.

"It was kind of hard since most [varsity] people are playing their third or fourth year," Zandbergs said. "I was still learning everything for the first time."

Though football was a new and demanding experience for Zandbergs, he was not discouraged. This season he is just as enthusiastic in the baseball diamond, and he has plans to play on the football team again next year.

Varsity baseball coach Brian Sullivan encourages his athletes to play an additional sport because he feels that it enhances their experiences in high school. Although he didn't specify the sport to be football, he is very pleased that so many students have taken the initiative to participate in multiple sports.

"I want students at this school to get involved and not just limit themselves to one opportunity," Sullivan said. "And I want them to feel good about the time they spent here [when they] leave."

Sullivan admits that he does worry about the numerous athletes who have suffered from serious football injuries. However, he pushes that feeling aside because he knows that in the end, the athletes will have benefited from their complete involvement with two sports.

Athletes who participate in both sports agree that there is a relatively great degree

of difference between baseball and football. Other than the use of different balls, athletes also notice a difference in aggression

"You can be aggressive and physical to some degree in baseball, but it never will match up with the intensity of aggression in football. And the pace of the game is so much faster in football than in baseball," junior Nick Utley said.

Both football and baseball require a significant amount of physical fitness and mental alert. But both sports have their own distinctive aspects, and that's what attracts so many athletes to play each one—the variety.

"I tell my players, 'Put your glove in the closet for a month,'" Sullivan said. "I don't want my players throwing baseballs 12 months out of a year."

Thus, many baseball players won't be surprised next season when the same faces appear on the football field.