The Ambrosian

Athletics at St. Ambrose: Another Classroom for Building Virtue

Surely, SAA students have abundant opportunities to grow in virtue within the bounds of 8:15-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. But, there is another important classroom for growing in virtue: extracurricular activities! The athletics program at SAA continues to offer students the chance to challenge the mind, body and spirit. From Cross Country, a sport that SAA offers under our own banner, to the co-op sports with Abundant Life Christian School (ALCS) and Madison Country Day, students can also seek virtue and excellence outside the classroom with volleyball, basketball, soccer, track & field, football and baseball.

The School of Cross Country

Why not make new friends before the school year even started? Last year, Jonathan Prado followed in the footsteps of his older siblings, Jaimee and Josh, and tried out for cross country as a 6th grader. He did make friends through cross country and built up his stamina for his competitive swimming season. An unexpected benefit though was growing in diligence. Now, as a 7th grader, Jonathan continues to see how, just as a race is long and challenging until the finish line comes into view, any long assignment or test - however...
alumna, Coach Michelle is acutely aware that will benefit students’ lives and those of the demands as well as the rewards of running; “Cross country provides moments for one to pray for strength while [one] is struggling as well as to pray in gratitude when celebrating. There are many moments for one to love others and for a person to learn the importance of dedication, patience, and grit.”

**The School of Volleyball**

As one of the co-op team sports offered at SAA, volleyball gives SAA students the chance to grow as a team with their classmates and expands the number of teachers from whom they can learn, bringing their talents and faith into new experiences.

“As coaches, we hope that we are teaching far more than just volleyball,” commented ALCS volleyball coach Becca Mast. Years from now, athletes won’t remember all the wins, losses and season records. They will remember the supportive relationships they built, coming together as a team, and the end of the matches when the team, fans, and, very often, the opposing team joined together in prayer. “It’s a way to be a light to someone else. Most of the schools we play are public schools, and they aren’t allowed to incorporate any type of religion. But, many of the schools comment on how much they enjoy being a part of [praying together],” said Coach Becca.

Freshmen Maria Pfeil and Caitlin Sturm played volleyball at Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Sun Prairie through 8th grade. Together, they were facing a change: their first year at St. Ambrose and volleyball with fellow Ambrosians and ALCS. How would they adjust? Volleyball captain and SAA senior Celine Schmiesing put them at ease. “Celine was really welcoming,” said Maria. “I remember, before volleyball season, that I saw her play. She came over and talked me.” In addition to demonstrating kindness, Celine also modeled leadership, gathering everyone together for prayer before games and driving SAA players to ALCS practices in the iconic SAA van.

For Caitlin, volleyball was a way to grow in humility. The senior high level was more difficult and her older teammates were superior players. Coach Becca pushed her players to improve - and Caitlin and Maria both rose to the occasion. Coach Becca observed, “they handled everything in stride and with a lot of grace and confidence.” Through it all, they were also able to make friends in many grades at both schools – a unique benefit of the co-op arrangement between SAA and ALCS, which allows both schools to offer more team sport options to students and broadens their experiences.

When combined with faith, athletics are another way to grow in relationship with the Lord and develop the virtues that will benefit students’ lives and those around them. For Coach Michelle, the lessons for athletes are easily applicable to any part of life: “In moments, we consider giving into the temptations all around us. However, we know to persevere and continue God’s work.” Through practices, meets and games, Coach Michelle, Coach Becca and all coaches involved at SAA are giving students priceless experiences that will make them better students and leaders.

Jonathan, Jack, Maria and Caitlin would agree that sports are fun. But fun is just scratching the surface!...