

## HIGH SCHOOLS

# A study in time management

## Precise planning is crucial for athletes studying in IB programs.

BY JODIE WAGNER PALM BEACH POST STAFF WRITER



BRIANNE LINT Suncoast (softball)



ANNA MORERA Atlantic (swimming)



JAMARI BOZEMAN  
Suncoast (football)  
STAFF PHOTOS BY  
RICHARD GRAULICH, AND  
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Top IB student-athletes include (from left): Dwyer's Nicole Mejias (volleyball) and Alex Pallo (soccer); Sophi Lukes, St. Andrew's (lacrosse); Anna Morera, Atlantic (swimming); Catherine Lopez, Forest Hill; and Brianne Lint, Suncoast (softball). RICHARD GRAULICH / THE PALM BEACH POST

The Atlantic High School media center has become a second home for Anna Morera.

With little free time to complete her homework after school because of athletic commitments, the nationally ranked synchronized swimmer and top student uses her lunch hour to get ahead on her assignments.

“I do a lot of homework during school hours,” said Morera, who will be a senior this fall. “You get tired after a certain hour. You can't stay up late. I do a lot of my work during the school day so it's easier for me once I get home.”

Skipping lunch, making schedules and prioritizing activities are just a handful of ways Palm Beach County teenagers are able to balance heavy workloads as students in the prestigious and rigorous International Baccalaureate program and as athletes with college scholarship

potential.

The IB Diploma program, administered by the nonprofit, Geneva-based International Baccalaureate Organization, offers high school juniors and seniors a lineup of Advanced Placement and college placement classes that can lead to college credit.

“One of the greatest thrusts of the program is it creates an international mindset that basically focuses on respecting other people and other cultures,” Suncoast High School Principal Linda Cartlidge said. “Even people with differences can be right. The program opens your mind to a world view versus just a national one.”

The IB curriculum is challenging, Cartlidge added. Developed by an international committee of university professors and master secondary teachers, it requires students to study courses across six disciplines and complete three core requirements.

Those requirements include a 4,000-word essay, a Theory of Knowledge interdisciplinary course, and community service.

IB students have their hands full with the program’s rigorous curriculum, but those who also participate in extracurricular activities — sports included — often face a daunting task when trying to manage their time.

Cathleen Lopez, who will be a senior at Forest Hill, is on the Falcons’ soccer, volleyball, and track and field teams.

She has no time off between sports seasons, and constantly juggles homework with practices and games.

“We have to keep up our grades, and that’s what I’ve got to strive for when I do my sports,” said Lopez, 17, who also holds down a part-time job. “I have to get good grades to play. Sports are my passion.”

The six other IB student-athletes interviewed for this story share that passion.

Suncoast's Brianne Lint (softball) and Jamari Bozeman (football, track); Dwyer's Nicole Mejias (volleyball) and Alex Pallo (soccer); Forest Hill's Lopez; Atlantic's Morera; and Sophi Lukes (lacrosse) of St. Andrew's all excelled in their sports while balancing a rigorous academic curriculum.

They are equal parts student and athlete, said Kurt Van Valkenburgh, Forest Hill's athletic director.

“Combining athletics with the academic rigors of the IB program is quite a challenge,” he said. “Both take a serious time commitment to be truly successful. It also takes a good deal of dedication to the excellence required to be a successful athlete and a high-achieving student.”

Pallo, a standout midfielder at Dwyer who is headed to the University of Georgia this fall, graduated fourth in her class last month. Her classmate, Mejias, graduated fifth. Mejias will attend the University of Notre Dame and compete for the school's sand volleyball team.

Both agree that time management was key in balancing their academic and athletic commitments in high school.

“With IB, you just have to have a discipline mind-set,” said Pallo, 18, who plays travel soccer for a Tampa-based team and also trains locally. “I have to give myself a schedule. If I don't have a schedule, I don't really follow my plans.”

“I try and prioritize what I do,” added Mejias, who travels to Pompano Beach regularly for volleyball practice. “When you get the homework, you do it right there and you try to get it done as fast as possible and then you go to practice. If I don't finish, then I'll take it in the car.”

Lukes, 18, a St. Andrew's graduate and four-year varsity lacrosse player, planned ahead at the start of the school year for projects and assignments that were due near the end.

“During the fall and up until December, I have time at home after school,” said Lukes, who will attend the University of Pennsylvania this fall. “I think about what I can do in the first part of the year to make it less stressful in the second part of the year. If something is due way down the road, I can get it out of the way before lacrosse season.”

Bozeman, who will be a senior, has a simpler approach to managing his time.

A highly rated defensive back who already has received numerous Division I scholarship offers, he doesn't keep schedules or timetables.

“I just plan accordingly,” he said. “There are no tricks. It's all about balance.”

Those who navigate successfully through the maze of IB assignments and athletics during high school are well-prepared to handle the rigors of college, said Jonathan Vilma, a 10-year NFL veteran linebacker and former University of Miami standout who graduated with an IB diploma from Coral Gables High School in 2000.

Vilma, a two-sport athlete and top student at Coral Gables, went on to earn a finance degree from Miami while starring for the Hurricanes' football team. He credits his experiences as an IB student for helping him achieve his academic and career goals.

“The IB program is really beneficial and does every kid a good service because it promotes the real world,” he said. “You get a lot of responsibilities handed to you and a lot of work handed to you, and you're expected to perform.”

“You have to be able to manage your time wisely,” he added. “You have deadlines to meet, you have responsibilities and you have things to do. The people who are better time-managers aren’t necessarily the smartest people in the world, but I think they get a lot more done.”

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