Top Mathlete

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	

Comprehension	Comments

John Urschel fits right in at the line of scrimmage. He's 6 feet 3 inches tall and weights 305 pounds, so it's no surprise to learn he's an offensive lineman for the Baltimore Ravens. What's unexpected is how the 24-year-old spends his downtime. He's not only an NFL athlete—he's also a mathematician.

Urschel loves math as much as he loves football. He has two math degrees, and he's published papers in mathematical journals. As a student-athelete at Pennsylvania State University, he even taught calculus classes!

What inspired him to purse both math and football? Urschel says his love of math came first. His interest was sparked "by the challenge of solving the unknown," he says. "When I was a kid, I always wanted to try to find the answer to things. Math was like a puzzle to me, and that's what I really took to."

When Urschel started playing football in high school, he fell for the sport just as hard. Working to become a professional athlete (or mathematician!) doesn't leave much time for other interests. But Urschel refused to give up either passion.

"I never stopped doing both, never stopped loving both, never stopped focusing on both," he says. And though they seem wildly different, Urschel says that balancing football and math makes him better at both.

"Math helps train my brain to make quick decisions, and that is extremely useful as a football player," he says. Meanwhile, football inspires a competitive approach to math—which helped him maintain a 4.0 GPA in college and graduate school.

Some people have worried that Urschel could injure his powerful brain in a game. Football results in more brain injuries than any other sport in the U.S.; in 2014, 202 concussions were diagnosed among NFL players. Urschel knows this, but he loves the game too much to quit. Eventually, he says, his body will tell him when to stop. Then he'll pick up his mathematical career.

No matter what, "both math and football will continue to be a part of my life," he says. "I'll have to stay close to the game—I love it very much."

Write a summary of the article.