

# Seahawks' Pete Carroll: Russell Wilson, Johnny Manziel prove youth sports specialization is foolish

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By [Eric Mandel](#), Digital Content Producer | December 21, 2015 @ 3:01 pm

**Listen:** Pete Carroll reviews the Seahawks' win over Cleveland

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Both Johnny Manziel and Russell Wilson are in the NFL after playing multiple sports in their youth. (AP)

If there were ever a pair of poster children for why not to push young athletes into specializing at one sport, they were the starting quarterbacks in Sunday's game at CenturyLink Field.

Both the Seahawks' Russell Wilson and the Browns' Johnny Manziel can be considered undersized QBs, but they are the type of athletes who can transcend the game because of their athletic prowess on multiple fields. It's the reason Seattle coach [Pete Carroll said Monday](#) that he's a staunch advocate of youth being allowed – or perhaps even pushed – to play more than just one sport.

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"I think that is an absolute crime," Carroll said of the trend of kids specializing in one sport. "I grew up playing three sports and I was always talked about by the coaches – why don't you focus on this or that? I think that's awful. I think coaches that talk to kids with that thought, I think it's just terrible because you only get one chance to be a little kid playing sports."

Carroll said participating in a variety of sports provides an awareness and insights that can't be gained any other way.

"Channeling a guy so someday maybe you'll get a scholarship when you're like 13 or something – what kind of thinking is that?" he said. "So I've always been opposed to that."

During his own football offseason, Carroll said he played basketball and baseball. Wilson and Manziel, meanwhile, were so talented at baseball that both drafted as infielders into the MLB (by the Rangers and Padres, respectively). Carroll believes there's an "innate athleticism" that comes with being skilled in multiple sports.

"That allows (Wilson) to have great poise and things don't rattle him because (Wilson and Manziel have) been able to deal with so much in their careers, in their lifetime, in all sports," he said. "It's not just football, it's baseball, basketball; it's everything that these guys have done that have given them insights and awarenesses and a comfort."

"You have to have all of that to have the confidence to create like they create so consistently," Carroll added.

It's that rationale that had Carroll saying he thinks the most comparable athlete physically to Wilson in sports history is Willie Mays.

"You guys don't remember what (Mays) looked like, but the kind of athlete he was, a really strong athlete, wasn't really long tall or that, but had marvelous, just natural talents," he said. "The kind of guy you could see him doing anything, he could play any kind of sport – do anything."