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**YOUR SAY: Are marching band members athletes?  
BY GARRETT HANSON**

My heart is racing in time with the drum major's hands at exactly 180 beats per minute. The sweat collecting above my eyes is falling slowly down the side of my face. My lungs are almost empty of air. My horn comes down and the rush of emotion and the crowd's cheers overwhelm me. I resist the urge to break attention and scream a mighty cry of victory. The show is over. We march off the field. The entire band is exhausted, out of breath and yet could still run a marathon. Why is it other athletes don't think that marching band is a sport? During practice I don't wear pads or helmets; I carry an instrument out in front of me that weighs as much as those pads and helmet. I don't run plays all practice; I march through each note hundreds of times a practice. I don't block a 225-pound mass from sacking the quarterback. I have to listen for the tempo, keep our feet in time, and stay in the form while playing music. I don't have to remember a playbook of many plays; I memorize 50-plus formations — and the music. I don't play four quarters; I perform for nine minutes. Does this make me less of an athlete than the football players I share the field with? Marching band isn't the only sport I participate in, I also wrestle. I have the perspective of seeing the argument from both sides. Yes, the football players work just as hard as the band does. Yes, they are more physical in certain aspects than the marching band; but no, we don't walk and play music for a few minutes then go in the stands and watch the game. When the band is out on the field, we are there to perform, to give our best performance for those nine minutes. Is a cross country runner more of an athlete than someone who runs the 50-meter dash because they run for a longer period of time? While marching, there are 100 things speeding through a band member's mind; he or she has to keep time; know where to listen; know the music; know when to breathe; hitting his or her spot exactly in the formation; know where to go next; know where the horn is pointed; know how big the next step needs to be; and know how many counts to the next formation. All of this happens every instant with every step and with every note played. If even one person stops thinking, the entire band crumbles. We all depend on the person to our right and left, the person in front and behind us. Every piece of the machine has to work perfectly for us to perform great. I am just as much an athlete as any player who touches the field, if not more. I perform for a shorter period of time, but with as much heart, if not more, than the football players. Other athletes cannot compare anything to the work that I perform during halftime or a competition. Most high school athletes could not handle the physical and mental requirements to march a great show and perform it perfectly.

That's why the marching band members aren't athletic musicians, but we are musical athletes.

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