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Trojan Scout

By Brad Cochi
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LONGMONT — Matt Cirbo is a two-sport star. He's an all-area football player and a state-qualifying track and field athlete.

A senior at Longmont High School, Cirbo was the Trojans' starting center this past season. He also played on the defensive line. This spring, he'll compete in track, where he hopes to return to state.

All the while, Cirbo has had a side gig. He's a Boy Scout, and then some.

This month Cirbo completed the last of the 129 total merit badges available to the Boy Scouts of America. To provide some perspective on the achievement, becoming an Eagle Scout, where most Scouts stop, requires only 21 merit badges. Cirbo has more than six times that many.

So what's tougher, football, track or earning every merit badge known to man?

"They all have their different challenges, but definitely the merit badges," Cirbo said. "It's really rare."

It took Cirbo 13 years to complete the requirements for all 129 badges, which includes even four historic badges — carpentry, signaling, pathfinding and tracking — available for just this year, the 100-year anniversary of the Boys Scouts. He had to finish all the badges before he turned 18 on Dec. 3, when he aged out of Boy Scouts.

Cirbo joined the Cub Scouts with his friends when he was young.

"It's definitely shaped a lot of my life, and what I've done," Cirbo said. "There are a lot of skills to be learned there."

Boy Scouts may not be the most popular thing to do among his peers, Cirbo says, but he's gotten over that.

"I've just had a lot of friends there, and it's real fun," Cirbo said. "And then, I also have a mindset where once I get on something, and I want to do something, it's really hard for me to stop."

He's not kidding. When he gets his mind set on something, he really doesn't stop.

"Anything he does, he has to do it all the way," said Kathleen Cirbo, Matt's mother. "It drives me nuts. We've never had to push him; he pushes himself. I try to pull him back a little, but he has to do it all, do it the best, be the best. He's had a curious mind since he was 2."

For such an astounding accomplishment, the Boy Scouts don't recognize what Cirbo has done in any special way. Cirbo thinks this is because they don't want to have other scouts trying to accomplish it by racing through it, falsifying their requirements and cheapening the experience.



Matt Cirbo is a Longmont High School athlete, but also is a Boy Scout. He has completed all 129 Merit Badges, a very rare accomplishment. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

“I really was careful about not doing that,” Cirbo said. “I wanted to do everything to the fullest I could.”

Cirbo has two boxes at home filled with the things he used to complete the requirements for the various badges. He even had to attach an extra 4-by-6-inch piece of fabric to his sash to accommodate for all the badges. Technically, Boys Scouts aren't supposed to put anything on the backside of their sash, but Cirbo didn't have much choice. He likes having them all in one place.

“There's a story behind all of them,” Cirbo said.

Scuba diving, Cirbo says, is one of the hardest to get.

Some are easier. Cirbo got three badges — wood carving, basketry and leatherwork — just for buying one kit at the summer camp trading post and putting it together.

Fishing was the hardest. To get the fishing badge, a scout must catch two fish, release one and clean and prepare the other. He fished for over 20 hours in Terry Lake, where his family lives.

“I still haven't caught a fish out of that lake,” Cirbo said.

Eventually, he caught a catfish up in Montrose.

His athletics at Longmont High School took care of several badges. His 4.2 grade-point average took care of a few others.

In fact, it was the composite materials badge — making fiber glass and other materials by combining different textures through resins — that triggered Cirbo's next great undertaking. He wants to be an astronautical engineer.

“Basically, I want to build rocket ships,” Cirbo said.

Apparently, he's a football player, track and field star, Boy Scout and now, he literally wants to be a rocket scientist.

The next stop for Cirbo is college. He doesn't know where yet, but he's applied to Stanford, M.I.T., Harvard, University of Colorado and others.

Playing football in college is still a possibility. He's got the talent to go that route.

As a junior, he had 81 tackles, six sacks and two forced fumbles on defense, while also playing on offense.

This season, when the Trojans lost their three-year starting center, he took over the job and excelled. He also played defensive end when the Trojans needed an extra boost, and made 35 tackles.

Whether football is in his future or not, he'll stick with the Boy Scouts, as an assistant troop leader.

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