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Character Education Through Sports

CHAMPION ATHLETE NOTE

The Power of Team as Community



The kind of person we are stems largely from the relationships we live.

Likewise, how much we are able to serve (influence/help) others depends upon our community. Community is formed by relationships that bind us together in care and commitment to each other as persons. Our family of origin is our first "community". As we age, we become members of other communities: a church, a workforce, a social network, a political party... For youth and adolescents, typically the first opportunity of community beyond family is a sport team.

Athletes do you ever consider the importance of your team community? Do you have a team that is a caring community that works well together building each other up, strengthening each other, making the team better as a whole? Athletes you can look to geese to understand the credo of "community."

Geese fly in a "V" formation. Science teaches us that, as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a "V" formation, the flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Teams who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and more easily when they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it feels the drag of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. Teams that function as a community quickly learn that they are stronger as a group and there is no "I" in "TEAM".

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the "V" and another goose flies point. Teams are more effective when there are multiple leaders who can step up for the team at different points.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Teams that encourage each other with positive words and mental support are more fun to be on and more effective in performance.

When a goose gets sick or is wounded and flies out of formation, two geese fall out with it and follow it down to help and protect it. Teammates can "have each others' back" and support each other through ups and downs; victory and defeat.

Team community is formed by relationships that bind us together in care and commitment to one another as teammates and thus strengthen the whole team. Athletes, remember the lesson of the geese in flight as you work to build your team's relationship.

Athlete Activity: Community Building

Have a team meeting. Share with your teammates the story of how geese fly in a V formation and the powerful effects of this communal journey.

Then, have a discussion.

- Does your team cooperate like geese in flight?
- Do you work together for the good of all?
- Have you picked one another up when tired/injured/discouraged?
- Are you able to rotate the point person?
- Do you use positive, encouraging words?

Then, ask each team member to make a resolution: On my team, how can I be more:

- supportive
- encouraging
- unselfish

The Cardinal Virtue of Justice relates to building relationships. Justice is about fairness and respect for each and every teammate as an equal. Remember that virtues need to be exercised to become good habits. Make a team commitment to put an emphasis on justice.



"Every team requires unity. A team has to move as one unit, one force. If the team doesn't do this, it goes down in defeat. You win or lose as a team, as a family."

~Jack Kemp, Football Player

And don't forget your personal relationship with God!


"God convokes us, he impels us to come out of our individualism, from our tendency to close ourselves into ourselves, and he calls us to belong to his family. Furthermore this call originates in creation itself. God created us so that we might live in a profound relationship of friendship with him."

~ Pope Francis (5/29/13)

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