

Are You Building a Team rooted in Justice?



Partner School of the Incarnation, MD
packages, play sheets, or practice drills.

According to an article that appeared in USA TODAY (August 2, 2016), "It was the spring. Attendance: mandatory. The players huddled in a conference room at the team's facility. The discussion, they were told, would impact the way they would be coached."

The meeting was called by Pete Carroll, Head Coach of the Seattle Seahawks, and included eight of the most-trusted leaders on his Seattle Seahawks. There was no mention of offensive formations, blitz

The meeting, was about a book. The book? *The Road to Character* by David Brooks (©2015, Random House). You rarely hear of a NFL head coach assigning a book on character as pre-season required reading, but this was a book whose meaning Coach Carroll wanted these players - Russell Wilson, Doug Baldwin, Richard Sherman, Kam Chancellor, Bobby Wagner, Earl Thomas, Mike Morgan, and Steven Hauschka - to absorb and impart to the rest of the team.

The opening sentences of the introduction to *The Road to Character* read like this:

"Recently I've been thinking about the difference between the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the ones you list on your résumé, the skills that you bring to the job market and that contribute to external success. The eulogy virtues are deeper. They're the virtues that get talked about at your funeral, the ones that exist at the core of your being - whether you are kind, brave, honest or faithful; what kind of relationships you have formed." (p.xi)

Dr. Jim Loehr, world-known performance psychologist, founder of the Human Performance Institute, and author of fifteen books refers to "virtues" as two types of character strengths: performance character strengths, and ethical/moral character strengths (*The Only Way to Win: How Building Character Drives Higher Achievement and Greater Fulfillment in Business and Life*, pp 71-72, ©2012, Hyperion Books). Loehr argues that, "No matter how many performance character strengths [an individual] has mastered - if his or her ethical/moral character strengths are not firmly in place by adulthood, then the performance traits really don't matter nearly as much as far as genuine life 'success'," (p.72).

One of the ways Play Like a Champion Today sets itself apart from other successful youth sports programs is its emphasis on character building, which we root in the Cardinal Virtues identified in the Catholic Catechism as the required qualities of living a moral life. In fact, Play Like a Champion stresses that coaches put a clear priority on the virtue of justice before all other virtues. Play Like a Champion maintains that achievement virtues are only virtues if they are rooted in justice. The desire to win at sports can be so powerful (for coaches, parents and athletes) that achievement virtues that lead to success, such as hard work, perseverance and self-sacrifice can easily become detached from justice (respect, honesty, fairness). Play Like a Champion coaches must remember to put the priority on justice as the foundation of all virtue. (*Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, Power & Sheehan, p.492, ©2014, Routledge).

TEAM ACTIVITY

Sports provide an ideal vehicle for teaching BOTH performance and moral character strengths; however, athletes do not acquire these virtues automatically through sport participation. Coaches must be deliberate and intentional about teaching virtue through moral and spiritual lessons.

Coaches, follow Pete Carroll's example and lead your team in a discussion of character. Center your discussion around the Cardinal Virtues:

- **Fortitude** (perseverance/courage)
 - **Justice** (fairness, respect)
 - **Prudence** (wise decision-making)
 - **Temperance** (perspective/balance)
- Ask each team members to write down one clear way they can display each of these virtues in their play, on the team.
- Ask the team members to write down one way they can challenge themselves in living these virtues this week in practice.
- Coaches, ask your team how they reveal the virtue of Justice through their team culture. How can your team do this more deliberately?
- Continue the discussion by asking your team how they can live the "Theological Virtues": Faith, Hope, Charity. Examples might be:
- **Faith** (team mass);
 - **Hope** (team prayer);
 - **Charity** (team service project)



Partner, St. John the Evangelist, MD

As you are moving into the middle (or end) of your fall sports seasons, take a step back and ensure that you have built in plenty of intentional opportunities for your student-athletes to understand what character in sport looks like and how they can develop their personal virtues. God Bless your coaching ministry.



Coach Clinic in Maryland this past weekend:
Welcoming new partners St. John the Evangelist and School of the Incarnation

COACH COMMUNICATION CORNER

Watch this [Ted Talk](#) by Brett Ledbetter, whose mentor is Dr. Jim Loehr. The topic is how coaching for character drives success. At 12 minutes into the Ted talk, Brett identifies the difference between Performance and Moral character traits.


Sport Blessing

"that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love."

~ from Dei Verbum, "Divine Revelation" Vatican II

Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series / PO Box 72 / Notre Dame IN 46556
playlikeachampion.org / information@playlikeachampion.org



 Like us on Facebook

Follow us on 

FOLLOW US ON 