

**PLAY LIKE  
A CHAMPION  
TODAY**

Character Education Through Sports

## Bonus Champion Note

Educating and Forming Champion Coaches, Parents & Athletes

### Keeping Girls in the Game



*While Play Like a Champion continues to work with partners and provide resources related to the COVID-19 crisis (see below), we believe it's also important to provide continuing education that partners can use when sports resume. With that in mind, we'll continue to provide our weekly Champion Notes on key topics for coaches, parents and athletes, while mixing in relevant updates and information on the impact of the new coronavirus. This week, we focus on an important topic of growth at all levels of sports.*

March is [Women's History Month](#), meant to commemorate and celebrate the role of women in American History. On this final day in March, we would like to ask our Play Like a Champion community to focus on the power for girls involved in sport.

The [Women's Sports Foundation](#), with the support of the [Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation](#), recently published [Keeping Girls in the Game: Factors that Influence Sport Participation](#). This research provides valuable insight on how to get more girls playing sport, help them thrive throughout their sport experience, and keep them playing for years to come. The report highlights the disparities in participation and dropout rates by gender, race/ethnicity, household income and urbanicity. The report acknowledges that girls in the study are more likely to have never played (43.1% of girls vs. 34.5% of boys) and have higher drop-out rates (36% girls vs. 30% boys). African American youth and youth from low-income households, especially girls in these families, were most likely to have never played sports or to not be currently playing.

Based on this research, *Play Like a Champion* offers the following suggestions to increase the number of girls participating in your programs and to support girls in their play.

#### For Coaches:

1. **Invite Girls to Play!** There is great power in a personal invitation to participate.
2. **Be Encouraging!** Many girls will drop out of sport because they feel self-conscious while playing. This includes worries about not playing well or a lack of comfort with the movements related to the sport. Encourage and praise their efforts.
3. **Be Body Positive.** The idea of a poor body image is shown to inhibit girls from participating, as they may not like how they look participating or wearing a uniform. Promote confidence in body movement and a positive view of athleticism.
4. **Celebrate Strength.** Those who stay in the game report they like "being strong" and celebrating their capabilities.



5. **Form a Positive Relationship with your Athletes.** Athletes who stay in the game reported liking their coach more than those who drop-out. Think of the “R” for “Relationships” in our GROW approach.
6. **Applaud Female Role Models.** Find positive examples of female athletes and coaches in your sport, encouraging girls to aspire to these examples. Check out *Play Like a Champion's* [#WeChampionFemaleCoaches campaign](#) or the recent [Game On: Women Can Coach](#) video for great examples.
7. **Set Team and Individual Goals.** Those still in the game report that coaches helped them set and achieve goals. This helps girls see that their efforts are fruitful and to know that their coach cares about them. Think “G” for “Goals” in our GROW approach
8. **Create a Fun Environment!** “Competing” is identified as an important value in sport, yet youth were more likely to drop out when the sport environment was “too competitive.” Coaches should work toward an equal balance of creating a competitive environment while having fun.
9. **Foster a Love for the Game.** Those who keep playing report loving what they play. Coaches can foster this love by building athlete confidence, a sense of mastery (reaching self-referenced goals) and positive connections with teammates.
10. **Focus on Character and Community.** Fostering positive social experiences that include character education and community outreach help athletes to keep playing.

### For Parents:

1. **Get Involved with your Daughter's Play!** Girls who are still playing sports report that their parents are involved in their sport by providing transportation, attending games, taking their daughters to watch sporting events, and practicing with their daughters.
2. **Shed Gender Stereotypes.** A third of parents in this study endorsed the belief that boys are better at sports than girls and/or that girls are not as competitive as boys. Come on parents, we're all better than this!
3. **Support Girls in Athletics.** Athletes who continue to play have parents who believe playing sports is important for their daughter and that their daughter is capable of improving and continuing to play.
4. **Understand the Academic Benefits of Sport Participation.** Research shows that sport participation does not get in the way of academics, but can actually increase academic achievements. This includes positive academic self-concepts, a positive attitude toward school work, higher grades and higher educational aspirations and achievements.



### For Athletes:

1. **Try Multiple Activities.** The study reports that broader sampling is helpful to find the right activity for each person's skill set and psyche.
2. **Love Your Sport!** Athletes will stay in the game if they love what they are playing. Don't love what you're playing? Check out other sports to find something you do love!
3. **Be Supportive of Fellow Female Athletes.** Players dropping out reported greater incidences of being teased or bullied by peers while participating in sports.



We must acknowledge that we have a lot of work to do to improve access and inclusion for girls in sport. This report reveals that an alarming 40% of girls and one third of boys reported never playing sports. The cost of sport participation remains the primary obstacle of youth entry into sport, disproportionately impacting girls, especially girls of color. We

urge you to do something tangible to reduce these statistics so that sports are more inclusive, particularly for girls and girls of color.

**We want to hear how your league/school is responding to this challenge to get more girls playing!** Email us at [information@playlikeachampion.org](mailto:information@playlikeachampion.org).

*The Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sports and in life. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, the WSF strengthens and expands participation and leadership opportunities through research, advocacy, community programming and collaborative partnerships.*

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**Weekly Scripture:** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:13)*

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## COVID-19: Resources for Partners

### Advice to Parents and Kids while Homebound

It is so important during these days of uncertainty to take specific measures to care for your whole health. Here is Play Like a Champion's advice for all families:



**Start your day with Prayer.** Remember that Jesus is with us, especially at our most difficult moments.

**Stick to a daily routine.** Days are clearly different than previously, but having the discipline of a schedule is critical to productivity and happiness.

**Space out your work.** School work doesn't have to be done all at one time. Schedule in movement breaks, meditation time and social connecting (via appropriate social distancing).

**Move everyday.** [Play Like a Champion has created a web-page dedicated to resources & ideas for young athletes to keep them physically active while at home.](#)

**Eat a healthy diet.** It may be tempting to binge on "comfort" food, but remember to do this in moderation. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and limit salty and sweet snacks.

**Talk about feelings.** Families members should "check in" daily regarding their feelings. It is normal to feel anxious, uncertain and to have some fear.

**Include mindful meditation** in your daily schedule. [Meditation](#) rewires the brain to cope more effectively with disruption and stress.

**Track your progress each day with a journal**, so you can remember what you accomplished.

**Express Daily Gratitude.** Acknowledging something for which we are grateful helps to keep perspective and remind us of blessings where they exist.

**Play Like a Champion** has a number of resources for partners as we work together to overcome the difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic. [View a message from our Executive Director Dr. Clark Power](#), then access resources by clicking the links below and engaging our community online!

**Youth Sports Summits on COVID-19:** We are hosting several virtual "summits" with partners to discuss the impact in communities, your needs and how we can support each other. [Click here to read about two summits hosted last week](#) and [click here to register to attend our next Summit](#) at Noon EDT on April 1st.

**Friday Morning Rally:** Our weekly newsletter highlights the important news and information related to COVID-19 and youth sports. [Sign-up to receive these emails for free by clicking here.](#)

**Social Media:** Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to get the latest



information & share resources with others in our community.

**Visit our Latest Resource: Keeping Kids Active at Home**

**We want to hear from you!** What are you doing to communicate with athletes and how are you working to keep athletes active in lieu of organized sports? We'll collect best practices to share with others who may be considering how to respond. Send us photos and videos of your athletes MOVING! Email us at [information@playlikeachampion.org](mailto:information@playlikeachampion.org).

## The Quotable Bishop



*"God does not abandon us, he goes with us even now in this time of trial and testing. In this moment, it is important for us to anchor our hearts in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to intensify our prayers and sacrifices for the love of God and the love of our neighbor. Let us draw closer to one another in our love for him, and rediscover the things that truly matter in our lives."*

Archbishop Gomez, President of the USCCB

**Access Resources & Learn More at [PlayLikeaChampion.org](https://www.playlikeachampion.org)**

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