



Letter to a Coach:

In every Play Like A Champion coach clinic, the clinic begins by coaches reflecting upon a coach who made a difference in their life. Emily Connor (Notre Dame Women's Lacrosse Player and Social Foundations of Coaching student) shares her thoughts on her most influential coach.

Hi Coach Smith,
I'm taking a 'Fundamentals of Coaching' class this semester, in which, we've all been encouraged to reflect on our experiences with coaches over the years. I think it goes without saying that you have been the most influential coach in my athletic career. You coached me from 4th grade P.E. through my senior lacrosse season, so no other coach really knows me like you do. I think your investment in your players has helped make you such a successful coach, and I know I will forever be grateful. If it weren't for you, I would not be at Notre Dame right now, so this might be a little overdue, but thank you!

As a lifelong athlete, I have a lot of experience with coaches, and I've been able to see different styles of coaching which helps me recognize what makes coaches effective. Now I think you have coaching down to a tee, but I still thought you might find the **GROW** approach that the Play Like A Champion program utilizes very interesting. It reminded me a lot of your coaching style.

The G stands for "goals." Specific goals are important for athletes. We needed to set goals



"A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are."

~ Ara Parasheghian

on our team, because we weren't satisfied with being mediocre or even just good. We wanted the title of #1. Still, you recognized that making that our only goal would be short-sighted. We also needed to set specific goals along the way to get us to the championship game. The reason is that they help provide bench-markers for us to improve upon. It also helped us to see our progress. I feel like you really understood this, and in my meetings I had with you, you made it clear that there is a lot more to success than winning championship games.

This brings me to the R of GROW. Relationships are one of the most important aspects on a team, because they can make or break a child's experience in sports. I know many girls who could have been great athletes, but they didn't get along with girls on the team. Most of them ended up quitting the sport, even some girls with great skill potential. On the flipside, I also know many people who stuck with sports because they felt such a strong bond with members of their team and couldn't imagine not being on the team. While I was different than most girls on our team, you helped me connect with them, so that now today I still feel a special bond to my teammates. There is nothing more fun than playing my former teammates in college and running to give them a hug at the end of the game.

The next part of **GROW** is ownership. Ownership forces players to make decisions for themselves and develop a stronger commitment to the team. Our team knew we got out what we put in. I think this idea can be lost in high school sports a lot. People do not want to take ownership, because ownership requires you to take responsibility. You managed to lead a group of girls who, for the most part, took ownership over our own play and this enabled us to be successful.

Finally, the W is for winning which is clearly an important aspect of sports, especially the older athletes get. One of the things I admire most about you is that you recognize that winning should not happen at any cost and should be

achieved in the right way, through fair play and sportsmanship. You instilled those values in me from the time I was in 4th grade.

I'm a much better lacrosse player and person because of your investment in me. Thank you again for everything!

Sincerely,
Emily

IF YOUR ATHLETES WRITE A LETTER TO YOU 5 YEARS FROM NOW, WHAT WOULD THE LETTER SAY?

WHAT WOULD YOU WANT IT TO SAY?

YOU ARE MAKING AN IMPACT ON YOUR ATHLETES - FOR WHAT WILL YOU BE REMEMBERED?