



## Champion Coach Note: Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines fortitude as, "The moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good." From the Latin, *fortis*, meaning strength, fortitude combines courage, perseverance, and effort; it is the virtue of sacrificing oneself for others because of a commitment to the common good.

The virtue of fortitude supports all other virtues as it gives individuals the courage to act on their beliefs, to remain steadfast in the face of opposition, to persevere to the end, whether it means winning or losing, and to take action despite fear of embarrassment. In athletics, fortitude encourages the pursuit of goals through persistence and determination. Fortitude ensures mental toughness and belief in oneself, despite challenges and obstacles. The virtue of fortitude helps athletes have the courage to persist to the end, and the heart to never give up or despair. The great golfer, Harry Vardon, stressed, "Skill guided by belief," and advised individuals to never reflect on the possibility of defeat. Cultivate self-belief in your athletes by complimenting them and encouraging them regularly. Encourage self-belief and hope, even in the face of overwhelming odds or imminent defeat.

The virtue of fortitude, the "Never despair" and "Never give up" attitude, is what distinguishes great athletes. Encourage your athletes to take risks and that failing is really the opportunity to work more effectively toward their goals. Fear is natural, and often inevitable. However, fear should not paralyze an individual, or athlete, when he or she is



5th and 6th Grade Girl's Play Like A Champion Tournament in Austin, Texas with Partner Catholic Schools

"Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections but instantly set about remedying them---every day begin the task anew."  
~ St. Francis de Sales

### Athlete Reflection

Watch the clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2HD57z4F8E> about Seattle Seahawks player, Derrick Coleman, and ask your athletes to reflect on the following questions:

1. Am I led by what others think or say?
2. Do I hold true to my own beliefs, even when pressured by others?
3. Do I continue to compete and fight for my team, even in the face of defeat?
4. Do I listen when others discourage me in pursuit of a goal?
5. Do I believe in myself, and realize my own tremendous value on my team and in my own community?
6. What do I value the most? Do my actions reflect my values?

Coaches, we also want to call your attention to our Play Like A Champion [Blog](http://ndplaylikeachampiontoday.blogspot.com/), <http://ndplaylikeachampiontoday.blogspot.com/>

confronted with a difficult situation or decision. One must learn to overcome or accept fear in order to pursue true good.

As a coach, you can help your athletes understand the virtue of fortitude by giving them examples of individuals (both athletes and non-athletes) who have modeled what can be achieved with courage, faith, and persistence (Ex. Lt. Dick Winters in *Band of Brothers*, Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, T.C. Williams football team in *Remember the Titans*, Rudy Ruettiger of *Rudy*, U.S. Hockey team in *Miracle*). Give your athletes positive reinforcement when they fail and compliment them when they are successful.

By modeling and stressing the virtue of fortitude this week with your athletes, you will be equipping them to make good decisions going forward, on or off the field. Skill and knowledge guided by belief – that is a valuable gift you can give your athletes.

Another story of fortitude displayed through the Seattle Seahawks team and their quarterback is commented upon here.