

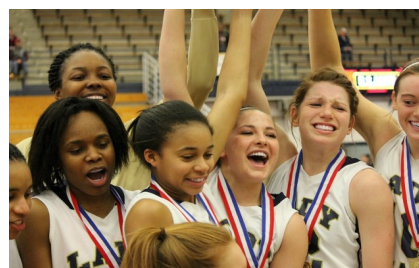


Champion Coach Note: Pure Competition

Competition is central to athletics; yet, our culture has twisted the nature of competition so that many athletes misunderstand what it means to compete with Christian virtue. Competition should be embraced as an opportunity for personal growth, an opportunity to pursue a goal in a way that glorifies God. The danger in competition arises when attaining a goal (such as winning) becomes an individual's sole focus at the expense of what is true and virtuous.

Competition can sometimes become ruthless, exploitative, and solely about winning or losing. However, focusing solely on the outcome taints pure competition. Pure competition doesn't involve exploiting opponents; rather, it is largely about loving them by pushing them to be their very best selves. As Proverbs 27:17 outlines, "as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Pure competition promotes mutual growth by challenging both sides to reach their potential.

A misconception perpetuated by society is that an individual is a pushover if winning isn't one's sole focus (creating a culture where individuals will do anything to win – even cheat). This is, however, far from the truth. Help your athletes understand that it is possible to be a fierce competitor and to play within the rules. It is possible to be competitive and tough on the field, but in a way that honors and glorifies God. It is possible to step onto the field and model the same Christian virtue that is practiced off of it. American humorist, Evan Esar, quipped, "If you can't win, make the fellow ahead of you break the record." Pure competition promotes such an attitude. Your athletes can be content to push themselves and their opponents to their very best, even if their



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You are never really playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits, that is real joy.

~Arthur Ashe

Athlete Reflection

Have your athletes watch the video(s) and reflect on the following questions:

Chariots of Fire:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwyltmUR3MU>

1. How can competition be pure?
2. Does God care about winning?
3. Does competition define you?
4. Does your identity lie in winning, or something else?

efforts don't result in a win on the scoreboard.

Stress to your athletes that competition, performances and results don't define who they are. While our culture largely stresses the importance of winning at all costs, Christians are challenged to think otherwise. Christ himself was counter-cultural, standing up for the truth in the face of contrary opinions. In Matthew 5:21-37, Christ offers a series of rebuttals to popular opinion: "You've heard it said...but I say." Our culture suggests that competition builds winners – winners who should be the best, who achieve a certain result or have a certain level of performance. In contrast, however, a Christian athlete might contend that a winner is an athlete that gives his or her personal best and plays the game with virtue and respect of his or her opponent.

This Holy Week, let us embrace pure competition. Christ's Passion demonstrated His willingness to stand up for the truth, even if that meant walking in such a way contrary to the views of society. Athletes are challenged in the same way in regard to competition. Have your athletes reflect on pure competition this week and encourage them to be fierce competitors while modeling Christian virtue as disciples of Christ.