



Coach Note: Team as Family

U.S. soccer great Mia Hamm said, "I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team. I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion." Hamm wonderfully captures the essence of a true team: the individual is secondary to the team.

A special bond is created when players work together, push each other, and make sacrifices in order to achieve a common goal. Through the ups and downs of games, practices, jokes, cheers, bus rides, and traditions, teams develop into a family. More than any number of wins, the relationships and friendships formed as members of a team are the most lasting mark of a team's success. Yes, players and fans will remember a winning season. But to the players, the feeling of being a part of something larger than self is what makes sport so unique.

A team *should* be as close as a family. This means understanding teammate's strengths and weaknesses, supporting teammates through difficult times, sharing in the euphoria of teammates' successes, and holding teammates accountable. This unity, this community, and this bond should be the focal point of any team – it is its heart and soul and, therefore, its most important element:

T: Together
E: Everyone
A: Achieves
M: More

As a coach, work to cultivate an environment that will encourage individuals to sacrifice for the team. Make sure all players know they are valued even if



Play Like A Champion Partner
 High School: St. Gregory Soccer Team,
 Chicago, IL

"This team is your family and you have to protect them...Tony is your quarterback. You protect his blind side. When you look at him, you think of me...and how you have my back"

– Leigh Ann Touhy

Athlete Reflection

Watch [The Blind Side](#) clip: and then ask your athletes these questions:

- Do I have my teammates' backs?
- Am I confident that they have mine?
- Look back on the past week. In what ways am I proud of how I acted toward a teammate?
- In what ways did I fall short?
- How is our team like a family?
- Do I make sacrifices for my teammates?
- What role do I play in this family?
- In what ways can I make a positive impact?
- What can I do to help my team become closer?
- Do I regularly push my

they are not the most talented player on the team. Encourage deeper relationships among the members of the team by organizing events outside of your sport. This could involve doing a service project like a Breast Cancer Walk or having a team field trip to paint walls in a Habitat home. Choose leaders on your team who will foster a spirit of inclusiveness of all. Create routines and traditions that solidify the bond among your players. You can't force these bonds, but you can create an environment in which they can flourish. Develop a team motto, design T-shirts, or create a team mix CD. Organize team dinners, prayer services, and social gatherings. These small efforts by coaches and team leaders can go a long way toward fostering the bonds and sense of community that ultimately are the most important part of an athletic team.

teammates to improve?

- Am I positive and encouraging toward my teammates?
- Do I accept criticism from my teammates and work to address my own weaknesses?