



Champion Coach Note: Fun is #1

The crest of Scottish soccer club, Queens Park F.C., reads: "Ludere Causa Ludendi" – *to play for the sake of playing.*

Sports, in their purest form, are intended for enjoyment and friendly competition. For youth athletes, the hands-down #1 reason that both boys and girls give for why they play sports is because it is fun. A Michigan State study found that almost 65% of high school athletes admit that the number one reason they go out for a team is to have fun. It's important not to lose sight of the primary reasons athletes gravitate toward sports: they are a source of joy, inspiration, and community.

As a coach, cultivate a fun, yet disciplined and hard-working environment. After all, a team only will be successful if each athlete is working to improve every day. Yet as basketball great, Michael Jordan, said, success shouldn't be attained at the expense of enjoyment: "Just play. Have fun. Enjoy the game."

Create an upbeat, positive team environment that encourages fun by planning team-building events. Design practices that strike a balance between meeting an objective and having fun. Allow your athletes to provide their input and pick their favorite drills or games in practices. Give your athletes ownership – ultimately, they are the ones who have to perform and compete.

Make it clear to your athletes that not every moment of playing a sport is going to be fun. It



Play Like A Champion partner,
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"In our play, we reveal what
kind of people we are."
~ Ovid

"You do not have to be holy...
to see God in all things. You have
only to play as a child with an
unselfish heart."

~Matthew Kelty

Athlete Reflection

As basketball seasons begin all across the country, watch this [Michael Jordan YouTube clip](#) with your athletes and then reflect on the following questions:

- Do I truly enjoy playing my sport, even when it requires hard work and sacrifice?
- Do I have fun with my teammates?
- Do I work hard yet still have fun training and competing?

takes hard work to perform at a high level, and it takes dedication to be a part of a team. But those difficult moments become worth it when athletes are given a chance to compete, as track and field legend, Jackie Joyner Kersee, explains: "The rewards are going to come, but my happiness is just loving the sport and having fun performing."

Remind your athletes to play for the love of the game and to cherish every opportunity to train and compete. After all, fun is number one.

- Do I try to find humor and enjoyment in all aspects of my sport?
- Do I share my love of the game with my teammates?