EDUCATIONAL SERIES OVERVIEW

The Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series has been crafted by leaders in the fields of educational development, sports psychology, and Catholic theology to support schools, community programs, parishes, and diocesan leagues in creating a more positive climate in sports.

The Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series is comprised of unique and comprehensive programs designed to meet the needs of its partners and deliver researched-based programs, resources, and materials. Play Like a Champion has several programs designed to elevate the culture of sport and enhance the life of each participant.

All Play Like a Champion programs share these important characteristics:

- **Play Like a Champion is research-based.** Every aspect of the program is designed using athlete-centered best practices supported by years of research into spiritual & character development.
- **Play Like a Champion resources** are developed in collaboration with faculty at Notre Dame’s Shaw Center for Children and Families and with social scientists, philosophers, theologians, sports scientists and physicians in universities nationally and internationally.
- **Play Like a Champion establishes ownership** on the part of the school or league and its key personnel through an integrative approach that involves the full range of stakeholders – coaches, parents, administrators and, ultimately, the athletes.
- **Play Like a Champion is centered on the principles** of justice, tolerance, cooperation, respect, and solidarity.
- Each Play Like a Champion program has been designed by national leaders in sports psychology, moral development and Catholic spirituality.
- **Play Like a Champion is delivered primarily through personal, interactive workshops and consultation.**

Through the Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series, program partners are in the vanguard of a movement to transform the culture of sports and better fulfill their Catholic educational mission by fostering character development through sports.

All Play Like a Champion coach clinics are nationally accredited by NCACE, the National Council for Accreditation for Coaching Education.

Play Like a Champion has trained over 100,000 coaches and sports parents in over 150 sports organizations in 42 states across the United States and Canada—enhancing the lives of over one and a half million athletes.
WHY PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION?

Over the past several years, there has been a growing unrest about sports throughout the country. There is mounting evidence that activities once seen as enjoyable and nurturing now have questionable developmental value. Broadly identified trends affecting our educational system include a win at all cost immorality and the exclusion of the non-elite. Several other disturbing trends have emerged, including:

- Youth sports are becoming increasingly expensive year-round programs, with high-stakes travel teams and tournaments.
- Many parents have sky-high ambitions for their children, taking extraordinary measures to “advance” their children’s athletic careers.
- As recruiters target younger athletes through elite camps, the pressure on children to specialize year-round in one sport is growing.
- There is mounting pressure on coaches to put winning above the good of the children.
- Sports programs often devote greater resources to the elite athletes while providing fewer opportunities for all children to play and compete.
- There are increasing incidents of “parent rage” at all levels of sport in all areas of the country.

Coaches exert tremendous influence over the athletes on their teams. They have the distinct opportunity to impact their athletes’ attitude, moral code, and entire sense of personhood. Play Like a Champion challenges all stakeholders in youth sports to take a hard look not only at their own schools but at the role of sports in contemporary culture.

PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION TODAY and CATHOLIC SPORTS

We believe it is possible to sponsor a highly competitive sports program in a Catholic setting while practicing exemplary fair play, respect, teamwork, kindness and sportsmanship. The Play Like a Champion Today Sport as Ministry Initiative (SAM) is designed to help athletic administrators, coaches, athletes, and parents work together to make sports the spiritual and character-building experience that it is meant to be. The SAM approach enables Catholic schools and leagues to fulfill their mission through sports programming that builds an engaging climate for team development and an effective system for building positive relationships with parents so that athletes can flourish.

THE WINNING APPROACH: COACHING AS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Inspired by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Statement, “Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry,” Play Like a Champion’s Sport as Ministry approach centers on the conviction that coaches are not only teachers, they are also Christian ministers. At the most basic level, the coach’s ministry is to serve children by helping them learn how to be more Christ-like through organized sports.

SAM supports Catholic sports organizations by fostering the development of the whole person through research-based strategies that focus on:

- Athletics as ministry to children and families.
- Building teams as moral communities.
- Promoting moral growth and gospel-oriented character development on and off the field.
- Spiritual development linking play to prayer.

The Play Like a Champion Today Sport as Ministry Initiative provides detailed, hands-on, practical education for those involved in Catholic sports programs. Schools partnering in this initiative may participate in:

- A Clinic for administrators and coaches
- A Parent Workshop
- An Athlete Sportsmanship Handbook
- An Officials’ Workshop
- An Athletic Plan with Ongoing Consultation from Play Like a Champion Today

“The (SAM) program emphasizes the importance of presenting sport as a form of youth ministry, and challenged us to view sports as a means of developing the whole person: physically, mentally, and spiritually” —Tauno Latvala, CYO Director, Archdiocese of Seattle
Play Like a Champion Today Educational Initiative  Sport as Ministry

PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION COACH CLINIC
The interactive coach workshop introduces the links between sport and spirituality and focuses on the following philosophical principles:
• Coaches must remember they are participating in children's play as they work to develop the moral community on the team.
• Coaches must be concerned with the complete development of all the athletes they are coaching: physical, mental, moral and spiritual.
• Coaches must be committed to nourishing the values of fair play, equality, and respect for all.

During the three hour coach clinic, participants are guided through exercises and examples with a workbook and video focusing on:
• Character and spiritual development in childhood.
• Coaching strategies for developing a Team of Champions, which include: decision-making, relationships, and motivation.
• The GROW model: Goals + Relationships + Ownership = Winning.
• Building Parents as Partners, including the development of an effective communication system with parents.

Coaches leave the workshop armed with the tools for success and a renewed focus on the importance of their role as coach/minister and are prepared to carry out the message they’ve received.

OFFICIALS WORKSHOPS
Play Like a Champion offers a workshop for youth sport officials to ensure that the caretakers of sport are well-versed in our principles. This one hour workshop includes a video offering advice from the NFL and a take home manual. The workshop provides examples of how Play Like a Champion’s philosophy can supplement the art of officiating.

PARENT WORKSHOPS
In addition to coach, official, and athlete education, Play Like a Champion provides Parent Like a Champion workshops for parents of young athletes that focus on appropriate roles and responsibilities for parents.

The Parent Like a Champion Workshop curriculum and materials aim to:
• Identify what to look for in a positive sports program and what parents can expect from a sport coach.
• Alert parents to behaviors that contribute to toxic sport climates and provide alternative behaviors.
• Emphasize moral development in sport and provide best practice strategies for ensuring a positive sporting experience.
• Provide parents with practical advice on nutrition, exercise, and motivation that can help their children to develop habits of wellness to last a lifetime, while assisting parents to connect their child’s sport experience with Catholic spirituality.

FOLLOW UP
The Play Like a Champion leadership team will continue to consult with the school after the workshops regarding program evaluation, follow up, and additional plans. Weekly emails are sent to coaches reminding them of the “Champion” philosophy and twice monthly emails are sent to interested sport parents to keep the philosophy in front of the entire school community.

PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY
Although the recommended program is the full educational series, Play Like a Champion works with each partner individually to determine the most effective way of presenting the information in their particular situation. Please contact us for more information.

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Play Like a Champion Today Educational Initiative  
Sport as Ministry

SPORTS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Play Like a Champion will host its annual Leadership Conference on the fourth weekend in June. We hope to see you there. Gather on the campus of the University of Notre Dame with concerned coaches and administrators from all across the country to engage in extensive learning and quality conversation about coaching for moral development.

Former participants spoke with great passion about the need for Play Like a Champion in their athletic programs. 100% of the participants indicated in a survey that they would recommend the conference to others.

"An absolute must for coaches and athletic administrators from early youth sports to collegiate athletics and everything in between."

Colin Bush, 2013 Attendee

Play Like a Champion Faculty Information

F. Clark Power, Ph.D.
Clark is one of the nation’s leading minds in moral education and developmental psychology. He is Play Like a Champion Today’s founder, director, and primary researcher, and provides key thought leadership for the program. He has served on the Board of the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education, the Notre Dame Faculty Board on Athletics, and the Association for Moral Education. A graduate of Villanova University and Washington Theological Union, and Harvard University, Clark has taught at Notre Dame since 1982. Clark has coached youth soccer, softball, and basketball.

Kristin Komyatte Sheehan, M.A.
Kristin has served as the program director of Play Like a Champion Today since its inception. She is the leader of partner relations, coordinates all educational programs, and spearheads the development of new curricula. Kristin has co-authored numerous articles and publications and presented Play Like a Champion Today workshops across the country. She teaches a course to Notre Dame undergraduates in the Education, Schools and Society minor entitled “Social Foundations of Coaching.” Kristin earned undergraduate and master’s degrees in theology and psychology from Notre Dame, where she was a varsity athlete on the cheerleading team.

Peter Piscitello
Peter joined Play Like a Champion Today in 2017 after having spent more than a decade in youth and college sports administration. He graduated from Benedictine College, where he studied business and theology before earning a master’s degree in education from the University of Washington, with an emphasis in intercollegiate athletic leadership. After working in development and business operations in college athletics, Peter spent several years as the Executive Director for the CYO in Kansas City (KS). He brings with him a passion for sports and their unique ability to help children grow and develop in faith, character and skill.

Go to playlikeachampion.org for more information.