



# **PARENTING ATHLETES**



**A PARENT'S PLAYBOOK TO  
BLESS AND SUPPORT KIDS  
INVOLVED IN SPORTS**

# HEY PARENTS!

We can probably agree that sports teach kids valuable lessons in leadership, teamwork, and hard work. As parents, we have the privilege of helping our kids navigate disappointment, rejection, and celebration.

We may know that but let's BE REAL...watching kids play sports can be a roller coaster of emotions—exciting and rewarding, yet nerve-racking, exhausting and sometimes frustrating. Especially if you are a former athlete.

Regardless of your own athletic ability, as parents, we need to recognize any unhealthy emotional attachments to our kid's performance, causing a struggle to keep the bigger picture in mind. It is easy to lose sight of the Gospel and forget that life lessons are more important than wins, points, or breaking records.

Learning to parent an athlete takes intentionality and lots of patience! As parents, our role is NOT to be the coach (unless we coach our kids team) but to bless and guide our children toward a higher, God-given purpose. Don't miss the chance to nurture growth through these experiences. We pray this playbook helps your family grow!

## **This playbook includes:**

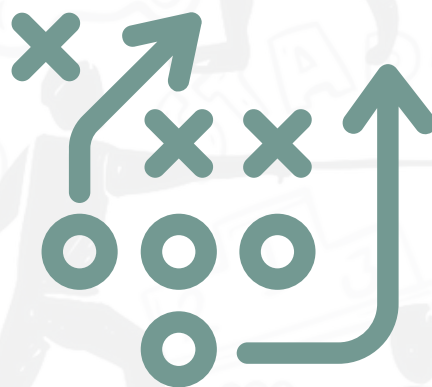
- 5 Gospel Centered "Plays" for Parenting Your Athlete
- Building Healthy Conversation With Your Athlete
- 10 Tips for Being a Gospel-Centered Spectator
- Identity in Christ Statements for Athletes
- Our Family Athletic Commitment (sample & blank)

**THE EMPOWERED HOMES TEAM**

## 5 GOSPEL-CENTERED "PLAYS" FOR PARENTING YOUR ATHLETE

Parents, these "plays" are designed to help your family prioritize faith, encouragement, and healthy competition so you can get the parenting WIN at home and raise well-rounded athletes.

- PLAY 1 - LOVE**
- PLAY 2 - ABC'S**
- PLAY 3 - WORK**
- PLAY 4 - TRUST**
- PLAY 5 - BIGGER**



READ ON TO LEARN HOW TO RUN THE PLAYS:

### 01 LOVE

- **Goal:** Ensure kids remember they are always loved by God and their family, regardless of performance.
- **Biblical Foundation:** "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).
- **Run the Play:**
  - **Focus:** Remove unnecessary pressure and encourage enjoyment.
  - **Emphasize:** Love is unconditional, based on being our child, not on achievements. Love remains constant, whether children score high or low, regardless if they win or lose.
- **Call the Play:**

Use phrases like:

  - "Play free, play loved, and have fun!"
  - "I love watching you play."
  - "I am proud to be your mom/dad, always."

**“AS PARENTS, OUR  
ROLE IS TO BLESS  
OUR CHILDREN AND  
GUIDE THEM  
TOWARD A HIGHER,  
GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE.”**

## 02 ABC'S

- **Goal:** Teach kids to focus on things they can control in sports and life, such as their own attitude, belief, and effort.
- **Biblical Foundation:** "Work with all your heart, as if serving the Lord" (Colossians 3:23-24).
- **Run the Play:**
  - **Focus:** Prioritize attitude, belief, and competing well over outcomes. Teach kids to always give their best and work as if serving the Lord.
  - **Emphasize:**
    - **A for Attitude:** Positive attitude determines success; be a great teammate and student.
    - **B for Believe:** Maintain a positive mindset and confidence, regardless of game results.
    - **C for Compete:** Give 100% effort, no matter the score or playing time.
- **Call the Play:** Call out and celebrate the ABC's when your kids demonstrate them. **Say phrases like:** "You can't control all the outcomes, but you can control your attitude." OR "Great job competing until the very end."

## 03 WORK

- **Goal:** Help kids understand the importance of perseverance and discipline, even when facing difficulties.
- **Biblical Foundation:** "We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).
- **Run the Play:**
  - **Focus:** Encourage a strong work ethic, especially through adversity.
  - **Emphasize:** Teach kids that hard work and discipline are required to achieve goals and win in life.
- **Call the Play:** Praise and encourage when you see your kids take initiative to practice on their own. Be patient in understanding that self-discipline and work ethic are built over time. **Say phrases like:** "I am proud of how hard you are working to improve." OR "Showing up and working hard is a success."

## 04 TRUST

- **Goal:** Remind kids to trust the process and embrace the journey, regardless of setbacks.
- **Biblical Foundation:** "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- **Run the Play:**
  - **Focus:** Understand that success takes time, and there are no shortcuts. Fall in love with the journey.
  - **Emphasize:** Success on and off the playing field, court, or competition floor takes time; a single bad play or loss doesn't define us. Life is full of ups and downs, and learning to embrace them helps foster resilience and health.
- **Call the Play:** Share your personal experiences overcoming adversity and trusting the Lord. **Say things like:** "Trust the process, embrace the journey, and never quit."

## 05 BIGGER

- **Goal:** Inspire our children to understand that life is bigger than sports; it's about ministry and reflecting the character of Jesus.
- **Biblical Foundation:** "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19-20)
- **Run the Play:**
  - **Focus:** Sports are temporary, but our impact for Jesus is eternal.
  - **Emphasize:** A life well-lived for Jesus is the ultimate goal, beyond achievements in sports, academics, or career.
- **Call the Play:** Celebrate character and love for others more than wins, losses, or playing time. Talk often about sportsmanship, respect of officials, coaches, and other players. **Ask questions like:** "How are you loving your team and reflecting Jesus every practice and every game?"

# BUILDING HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR ATHLETE

As parents, our words can be as powerful as the game itself—what we say can lift up our athletes or tear them down. Staying focused on encouraging and uplifting communication by providing positive feedback is essential. Here are some things you can say to your kids before or after practice, as well as before and after games or competitions.

## BEFORE PRACTICE

### 1. "What do you plan to improve on today?"

Reinforce what they have been working on. Encourage your kid to get better at practice today.

### 2. "Encourage a teammate during practice."

Learning to be a good teammate matters in the long run. Encourage your athlete to uplift their teammates - going into practice with the intention of finding ways to encourage other teammates.

### 3. "Time to refine your skills and have some fun."

Teach your athlete that embracing the small fundamentals leads to big results and ultimately can make any game a lot more fun to play.

## AFTER PRACTICE

### 1. "Did you get better today?"

Let your athlete process how practice went. Reminding them that with every practice, they get better because they put in the work.

### 2. "What is something new you learned today?"

Because they shared with you what they wanted to work on at practice, you can reinforce what they are learning by letting them share.

### 3. Don't say anything about practice.

Be honest. Sometimes we as parents want to download every part of our kid's day and they just don't want to. That's okay. You don't always have to discuss every practice. Instead, ask about a hobby or another part of life.

## BEFORE GAMES/COMPETITIONS

### 1. "Work hard, have fun, be a good teammate."

Simple statements are needed before the game, don't overload your athlete, empower them.

### 2. "Attitude, Effort, and Joy."

Remind your athlete of the aspects of the game that is in their control.

### 3. "Win or lose, I am proud to be your mom/dad."

Remind your child of your love and support for them regardless of the outcome or performance.

## AFTER GAMES/COMPETITIONS

### 1. "How did you feel about the game?"

Instead of immediately critiquing performance, allow your athlete to process and share their thoughts first.

### 2. "Would you like some feedback about the game?"


Asking permission before giving feedback is a powerful way to ensure your child is ready to hear what you have to say. If they say no, simply reply, "sounds good" I am here if you want to download or talk about the game but no pressure. It gives some time to process and come down from emotions that may have been tied to the game.

### 3. " My favorite part of the game was..." (nothing about performance)


Find something your child did or didn't do that made you proud that is NOT connected to their performance. Example: My favorite part of the game was when I could see you get frustrated, but you stayed focused and kept your head in the game.

**HAVE YOUR WORDS BLESSED  
YOUR ATHLETE TODAY?**


# 10 TIPS FOR BEING a GOSPEL CENTERED FAN



Stay positive even in tense or close competitions




Avoid yelling at referees or officials. Ask yourself - how many times have you seen a ref. change a call because a parent berated them?




Cheer for the whole team; not just your kid.




Remember that every player/coach/official is made in the image of God and a human capable of mistakes.




Avoid coaching from the stands - you're not the coach.




Don't blame everyone and everything for losses. Bad calls & mistakes are a part of life...acknowledge your disappointment and move along.




Maintain healthy perspective. We get it, this game may be important BUT it is not the most important part of your child's life.



Check your passive-aggressive shout-outs at the door. They are destructive.



**FIX YOUR FACE!**  
Your attitude, body language and words are a model for your kid - what do you want to reflect?



When you can, always thank coaches and officials. You may not agree with them but you can respect them.



# IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Because sports are what you do not who you are.

I am **LOVED** by God regardless of performance or skill.

**John 3:16**

I am a **CHILD OF GOD** and He is proud of me not because of my ability but because I am His creation.

**Romans 8:16**

I am **CHOSEN** by God even if I face rejection. I am chosen for the purpose of loving others and abiding in and reflecting Christ.

**John 15:16**

I am a **NEW CREATION** in **CHRIST** and His **AMBASSADOR** in all I do whether it be practice or competition.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

I am **BLESSED** in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

**Ephesians 1:3**

I am **VICTORIOUS** because of Jesus not because I win games.

**1 Corinthians 15:57-58**

I am **FREE** in Christ; therefore I can play freely while loving and serving my teammates, coaches and officials.

**Ephesians 1:3**

I am God's **MASTERPIECE**. He created me with unique gifts and talents and empowers me to represent and reflect Him in all I do.

**Ephesians 2:10**

# OUR FAMILY ATHLETIC COMMITMENTS

## Parent(s)

- I commit to maintaining a positive and encouraging attitude.
- I aspire to keep a healthy perspective - putting the Gospel and love of Jesus before my desire for wins and record breaking careers.
- I understand that losses and mistakes are inevitable and a natural part of athletics and competition. I will not dwell on losses/mistakes.
- I desire to model healthy & humble competitive focus for my child. If I lose my cool, I will own it, apologize, and seek to improve.
- I commit to helping my child improve his/her skills and knowledge, but not at the expense of our relationship.

## Athlete

- I commit to maintaining a positive and encouraging attitude.
- I aspire to keep a healthy perspective - putting the Gospel and love of Jesus before my desire for wins and record breaking careers.
- I understand I will lose and make mistakes. I will do my best to learn from them but not dwell on them.
- I commit to being a team player - encouraging my teammates and cheering them on regardless of my own playing time or performance.
- I understand that athletics and competition are a great way to learn about leadership and life and while they are important, this is not the most important aspect of my life.

**SIGN  
HERE**

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# OUR FAMILY ATHLETIC COMMITMENTS

Parent(s)



Athlete



SIGN  
HERE

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The background is a dense collage of light gray silhouettes and line drawings of various sports and activities. It includes figures running, jumping, swimming, playing basketball, tennis, and badminton, as well as equipment like a tennis racket, a badminton racket, a bicycle, a wheelchair, a soccer ball, and a flag. The overall theme is active and healthy living.

**empowered  
Homes**



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[EmpoweredHomes.org](http://EmpoweredHomes.org)**