PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION TODAY®
A Team for Every Child

# Champion Parent Note
Educating and Forming Champion Parents

Developing Young Athletes

For nearly 50 years, researchers and executives of sport governing bodies have sought the optimal path for developing elite athletes. Developed by Dr. Istvan Balyi of Canada's *National Coaching Institute*, the **Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD)** became an early standard in this area, followed by the more recent **Youth Development Model** (YDM) (Lloyd) and **American Development Model** (ADM). Originally instituted by US Hockey in 2009, the ADM has since been adopted by the full US Olympic & Paralympic Committee "to help Americans realize their full athletic potential and utilize sport as a path toward an active and healthy lifestyle" (*teamusa.org*). In other words, it's the path that experts believe will help athletes reach maximum performance. Those in charge of Team USA have a competitive reason for putting their energy behind such a model. As the final medal count in the most recent Olympic Games demonstrates, we're no longer top of the podium:

PLACE	COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
1	Norway NOR	16	8	13	37
2	ROC	6	12	14	32
3	Germany GER	12	10	5	27
4	Canada CAN	4	8	14	26
5	United States USA	8	10	7	25

With 12 more total medals and twice as many golds, Norway is demonstrating that it's not always the biggest country or the one with the most resources who comes out on top. This triumph is no accident; for the second straight winter games, Norway blew away the competition, the result of a youth development model updated in 2007 that **priortizes participation and access to sports for all children** [both the linked article and **this short video** are well worth a click for parents]. All this success has leaders across the world questioning their own models, which have too often left athletes injured, burned out or simply unable to reach their potential.

So what can we learn from the three development models above and Norway's recent success? The first lesson is obvious: **participation** is the most important thing. As the above article notes, an incredible 93% of children in Norway grow up playing organized sports. To this end, both the original LTAD and the more modern ADM place an emphasis on kids playing a variety of sports well into their teenage years. In fact, it's this multi-sport participation that many credit for developing more well-rounded athletes who reach high levels of performance. What's more, giving access to as many kids as possible widens the pool and gives all kids an opportunity to get in on the fun.

It's **fun** that is the other key aspect of development. According to a 2014 study from George Washington University, 9 out of 10 children say they play sports to "have fun." Not surprisingly, research shows that kids who don't have fun end up dropping out of sports; that 70% of American kids drop out of sports by the age of 13 suggests we have a problem. When we think about it, this makes sense: in order to perform well in something, you have to enjoy what you're doing. The irony is that by trying our hardest to improve performance through early specialization or by hiring expensive coaches, we actually seem to be impeding long-term development.

Parents: take some time this week to look over the American Development Model and consider the example that Norway has set for youth sports via the links above. Then evaluate your family's experience with sports and decide whether *participation* and *fun* are the top priorities for your young athletes. By encouraging them to discover and play multiple sports and keeping the game fun, they'll be happier, more well-rounded athletes in the long-run!

For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am wondrously made. Wonderful are your works! You know me right well; my frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. ~ Psalm 139:13-15

Early Bird Deadline Extended: Register for $499 Through March 15th!

After hosting virtual conferences the past two years, the 2022 *Play Like a Champion Today* Sports Leadership Conference returns ***in-person*** **June 17-18, 2022** at the University of Notre Dame. We are thrilled to once again gather with our national community to *connect* with each other, *learn* from a great group of speakers and be *inspired*. This special gathering will mark the 15th anniversary of the annual conference.

With demand high, we've extended our "Early Bird" Registration deadline through March 15th! **Register now to get our special rate of $499** (*the price will go up to $600 on March 16th*). If you register by April 1st, you'll also be entered for a chance to get your registration fee reimbursed! We'll be drawing one more lucky name on April 2nd from those registered and the winner will have their registration fee covered by *Play Like a Champion*.

As we celebrate our return to this in-person event, the conference will highlight important topics in mentoring and coaching youth athletes in today's world. With a great lineup of speakers and an opportunity to connect once more with peers from across the country, you don't want to miss this! Click below to register today!

Learn More & Register for the 2022 Conference!

A Pre-Game Prayer

God our Father,
You have created us to strive for the best.
Grant to all athletes, coaches, and fans,
strength to pursue excellence during this event.
We pray for the safety of these athletes;
Protect them from injury and harm.
And finally, we pray for your grace, that you would
provide us with the endurance to pursue our
heavenly prize: eternal life in Your Son. Amen.
Used with Permission by David Bennett, ChurchYear.Net

http://www.churchyear.net/prayer/prayerbeforeasportsgame.html

Play Like a Champion's "Daily Prayers for Champions" page has been updated! Visit www.playlikeachampion.org/prayer for more than 200 prayers plus resources that can help you and your team grow closer to God while participating in sports.

Access Resources & Learn More at www.playlikeachampion.org

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