

# Go Girl

## Benefits of sports for girls:

**Teamwork** – Girls must learn how to cooperate with teammates and many are introduced to diversity through their early sport team experiences. Trust, cooperation, and friendship are very important aspects of teamwork. Players can work toward common goals by filling a role on a team.

**Exercise/Physical Fitness** – According to the Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota, sports improve muscular strength, power, aerobic endurance, weight management and better health in general.

**Social Benefits- communication skills** – Learning to interact and improve communication skills through the team environment. Verbal and non-verbal communication on and off the field are keys to maximizing the experience for players.

**Competition** – The team environment can create competitiveness among teammates and other teams. Competitiveness may be part of the personality make-up, however it is vital that as an adult, competing must be kept in perspective and the process to compete should be more important than the outcome.

**Learning about self (reflecting)** – The way we react and adapt to situations teaches us a great deal about ourselves. It is important to take the opportunity to reflect and learn about ourselves through the team environment. We learn about what we like, our characteristics, what we want to be better at, what we think we are good at and what our goals might be.

**Leadership** – Sport teams often teach us how to demonstrate leadership qualities. We look at simple things like: Who wants to be first in line? Take throw-ins? Help a teammate? Show kind behavior? These are opportunities to develop and encourage healthy leadership in all players on the team.

## Characteristics of the female athlete/team

Boys and girls may have different needs in terms of getting ready for practice or games. Boys tend to see the activity as social, but girls tend to want to discuss and be social to feel connected to the group, more than to the group activity.

Social interaction with their teammates might be their main reason for participating in sports and often is essential to the girl athlete.

They want to feel connected to those around them, but still want to train hard.

## **Go Girl**

They want to be part of the decision-making process. Have them contribute to establishing the team rules. Make them think what you want them to do is their own choice. Let them choose and lead them to the correct answer. Never embarrass your athletes – they do not respond well to public criticism.

### **Pointers to maximize the learning experience for the female athlete**

Proper emotional and motivational support will most likely be different for each athlete – it is the responsibility of the coach to assess different personalities and provide support that best suits each person as a whole.

Effective coaches also know how to adapt to the consistent individual themes in the female sport experience which include a desire to build personal relationships, preference of coaches who are empathetic and communicate openly, placing high value on personal improvement and preferring not to have their confidence attacked.

When counseling a player, try the “I feel” messages. Say, “I feel you can be a great outside midfielder if you can improve on crossing the ball with both feet.”

Use active listening by repeating back what you hear “them” saying (mirroring).

Acknowledge the presence of your players each day.

Be clear and concise with instructions and expectations of the player. Never give negative ridicule.

Address the behavior not the player.

Praise good behavior and give encouragement combined with instructions after poor performance.

Teach “self talk” – mental imaging.

Teach the importance of setting goals.

### **Unique Issues**

Body Image / Eating Disorders