



## Resources for Coaching Girls

### Coaching girls in Sport

“Research indicates that girls and women become involved in physical activity and sport for many reasons. Most commonly, females are attracted to sport for the elements of *affiliation, skill development, personal development, a nurturing environment and a social network*. Therefore, in order to promote and maintain girls’ and women’s participation in sport and physical activity, coaches need to understand what motivates their athletes to participate and provide an environment that addresses those needs”.

Coaches Association of British Columbia (C.A.B.C)

Coaches and parents of female athletes are encouraged by the Dartmouth Lakers Basketball Club to explore the organizations and publications listed below which offer user friendly information that support and enhance girls’ participation in sports. Simply put your cursor on the blue websites listed *at the bottom*, hit the control button and click on the mouse to gain instant access! Highlights from these websites that speak to coaching philosophy and best practices that have proven to be effective have been provided here to showcase a small portion of the information found. First, quick facts are offered to underscore the importance of issues related to girls in sport.

#### Quick facts:

- "Physical inactivity has become an increasingly alarming situation in the Province of Nova Scotia. Beginning at the young age of 12, *girls’ involvement in physical activity declines steadily*, where less than 1% were still active by grade 11". Physical activity decreases as the ages of girls increases. In fact, girls drop out of sport at a rate that is six times greater than boys by the age of 14. (*The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical - CAAWS*)
- By age 18, more than 50% of women perceive themselves as too fat, despite having normal body weight. If a girl does not participate in sport by the time she is 10, there is only a 10% chance that she will participate when she is 25. (*Girl’s Soar, Active Halifax Communities*)
- It is also known that female high-school athletes are 92% less likely to get involved with drugs, and are 89% less likely to get pregnant when they are involved in sport (Sport Matters, Online). They are also three times more likely to graduate from high school than their non-athletic peers. Female participants in sports and fitness programs are at



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significantly lower risk for developing breast cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease, strokes and depression. (*Her Life Depends on It II, Woman's Sport Foundation*)

- Active girls and women experience increases in self-confidence, self-esteem, positive body image and reduced anxiety and improved skills at school. (*Her Life Depends on It II, Woman's Sport Foundation*)

### Quick Tips for coaches:

#### Team Practice

- Understand that girls enjoy the social aspects of sport by encouraging social interaction and development, *in addition* to athletic development. Give girls the opportunity to socialize ideally at the beginning of practice. When coaches allow for this social time, the overall focus of the game or practise is better.
- Avoid formation of cliques by mixing groups and pairing girls differently- athletes in studies have stated that “cliques have the power to destroy a season”. *Team building is essential!*
- Run programs so girls experience success- *provide opportunities to progressively develop and master skills* (essential for girls; if they don't see progress they may not want to continue). Girls may take longer to develop a skill not because of a lack of physical ability but rather due to their thought processes in regards to what they *think* they are capable of (impacting self-confidence).
- *Involve girls* in the design of programs and training as much as possible- collaborative goal setting where the athlete and coach/team set and reset goals together is beneficial.
- *Incorporate games* into practices to make the atmosphere fun and enjoyable; females may become disinterested if practices don't have some element of fun.
- *Create physical challenges* that allow females to positively experience their athletic capabilities- ‘don't water down’ sport but respect individual abilities.
- Set the stage for *work ethic early*

#### A Positive Approach:



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- Use *positive motivation*, both with the whole team, and with individual athletes. Emphasize participation, celebrating personal bests and accomplishments.
- Focus more on the process of becoming physically fit and developing skill than on the outcome; females may be less concerned with the final outcome
- “A *supportive, non-confrontational approach* works usually better with girls (and with boys especially before high school levels). Studies have shown that *stress impairs* learning in females, with moderate stress degrading young girls’ performance”. A well-modulated voice, avoiding yelling at athletes either male or female, is always the best approach. (*Good Youth Sports Coaches Understand Gender Differences but Avoid Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes*, Moms Team). At birth, girls’ hearing is 7 times more sensitive than boys and this difference only increases over time. (*Why Gender Matters*, Dr. Leonard Sax).
- *Allow athletes to make mistakes* in their decisions to encourage independent learning.
- Spend *equal time* and attention with athletes in order to avert charges of favoritism-balance time so girls’ perception is equality and fairness. Singling girls out in front of others is uncomfortable for the girl singled out and damages team building efforts.
- Try to be clear, giving *performance-based feedback*; females cannot improve unless they have specific feedback. I.e. focus on a specific technique rather than just saying ‘good try’.
- Understand *different personalities*; certain tactics that motivate some will negatively trigger others.
- Female athletes have stated “*body image affects everything*, including performance”. Coaches understand that weight gain is a normal part of puberty and adolescence for females and be sensitive to girls who may be self-conscious about their bodies. For example, allowing them to wear their choice of comfortable, safe clothing at practises will increase their comfort and participation.

\*\*‘Quick Tips’ section has been pulled out from the CABC report entitled, *Coaching Female Athletes*, unless otherwise stated.



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### Further ideas for Dartmouth Laker Coaches:

- Offering opportunities to do activities as a team outside the sport, allows athletes to get to know each other which help them work together as a team. *Team building is critical!* (CABC)
- Celebrate active girls! Send team pictures to the Dartmouth Laker website for posting. *Girls inspire other girls* to participate and value sport.
- Send in *updates* on games to newspaper.
- *Encourage leadership/mentoring activities!* Ask older girls to become an assistant coach on your team!
- *Introduce athletes to positive female athletes* as role models – invite your team to watch an older girls Lakers game or University level game.
- *Share* the website information below with parents and girls on your team

### Publications and Resources: (Put curser over source: ctrl + click)

- *Coaching Female Athletes*, Coaches Association of British Columbia, publication written by coaches for coaches that highlights a positive team building approach to coaching female athletes with an ‘athlete centered model’ of coaching.  
<http://www.coachesbc.ca/coachingfemaleathletes>
- *Self-Esteem, Sport and Physical Activity* (CAAWS; 2003)  
[http://www.caaws.ca/active/eng/resources/pdfs/Self\\_Esteem.pdf](http://www.caaws.ca/active/eng/resources/pdfs/Self_Esteem.pdf)
- ‘*On the Move*’ *Handbook Resources*: A National network of service providers involved in female- only programming with information regarding the importance of increasing female participation in sport. - <http://www.caaws.ca/onthemove/e/index.htm>
- *In Her Voice: An Exploration of Young Women’s Sport and Physical Activity Experiences* Recommendations for coaches - [http://www.caaws.ca/pdfs/in\\_her\\_voice\\_e.pdf](http://www.caaws.ca/pdfs/in_her_voice_e.pdf)



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- *Her Life Depends on it II*, Women's Sports Foundation, - <http://home/research/articles-and-reports/mental-and-physical-health/her-life-depends-on-it-ii>
- *Good Youth Sports Coaches Understand Gender Differences but Avoid Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes*, Mom's team, retrieved June 6, 2012.  
<http://www.momsteam.com/team-parents/coaching/general/good-youth-sports-coaches-understand-gender-differences-but-avoid-rein#ixzz1x2orLHrC>
- *The Young Female Athlete: Using the Menstrual Cycle as a Navigational Beacon for Healthy Development* (Canadian Journal for Women in Coaching - Harber; 2011)  
[http://www.coach.ca/files/WiC\\_Journal\\_October2011\\_EN\\_1.pdf](http://www.coach.ca/files/WiC_Journal_October2011_EN_1.pdf)
- *The Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Girls and Women* (BCCEWH; 2000)  
<http://www.bccewh.bc.ca/publications-resources/documents/physicalactivity.pdf>
- *Olga Kotelko: The 91-year-old track star*  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/world\\_news\\_america/9439116.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/world_news_america/9439116.stm)

### Organizations

Canadian Association of the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) - provides many resources for coaching female athletes, getting girls involved in sport and women on boards- <http://www.caaws.ca/>

Women's Sports Foundation - <http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/>

ProMOTION Plus- <http://www.promotionplus.org/content/home.asp>

Coaches Association of British Columbia- <http://www.coachesbc.ca/coachingfemaleathletes>

Active Halifax Communities- *Girls Soar*- [www.activehalifax.ca](http://www.activehalifax.ca)

Women in Coaching - Coaching Association of Canada (CAC)- <http://www.coach.ca/overview-s13814>