

3 Ways Coaches Can Cultivate Joy and Confidence in Young Athletes

FEATURE IMPACT

Youth sports can change lives - building confidence, resilience and lifelong friendships among the kids and teens who play. In fact, winning games is often the least important part of the experience.

As an official sponsor of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027(tm), Dove is proving you don't need a championship trophy to be a winner with the announcement of Back Her Game, a nationwide search to find a girls' sports team where coaches and players keep joy and confidence at the center of the game. Through Oct. 4, eligible adult coaches of girls' teams with players ages 13-18 can enter by posting an Instagram or TikTok video showcasing how their team brings confidence and joy to the field, tagging @dove and using #KeepHerConfident and #Contest in the caption. The winning team will receive an all expenses paid trip to the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027(tm) in Brazil.

Creating an environment where young athletes feel seen and appreciated is its own reward. Consider these tips from Dove and longtime partner Kylie Kelce highlighting three ways coaches can help their players feel like they belong.

Notice and Celebrate Small Moments of Progress

Success isn't just defined by victories on the field, so those wins aren't the only kinds that deserve to be celebrated. Pay attention to the personal growth and progress each athlete is showing, recognize them with specific praise and consider starting small traditions to celebrate when players meet goals or exceed expectations.

Make Room for Body Confidence

According to research from Dove, 1 in 2 girls who quit sports have been criticized for their body type. For young athletes to feel secure, supported and comfortable on their teams, they need coaches dedicated to building spaces that encourage body confidence.

That's why Dove launched Body Confident Sport, a free, evidence-based program from the Dove Self-Esteem Project designed to give coaches the tools to build body confidence among girls ages 11-17 and help create more supportive sports environments.

"Sports can give girls so much - friendship, confidence, teamwork and memories that stay with them for life - but that only happens when they feel supported enough to keep playing," said Kelce, mom of four and coach. "As a coach, I love that this campaign shines a light on girls' sports teams that show up for each other to remind girls everywhere that they belong on the field exactly as they are."

Recognize the Teammates Who Lift Others Up

Although coaches play a vital role in shaping team culture, they can't do it alone.



Encourage help by recognizing the helpers. If you notice a girl who goes out of her way to help shy players feel included, one who is first in line to comfort an upset teammate or anyone whose presence adds light and positivity to the group, it can be as simple as pulling her aside to let her know you see and appreciate her efforts.

To learn more and help girls keep playing with confidence, visit Dove.com/bodyconfident-sport.






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