Overcoming Challenges

During a remarkable fencing career, Molly Sliney won two collegiate National Championships at the University of Notre Dame, a US National Championship, was a two-time gold medalist in the Pan American Games, and a member of the US Olympic Team at the 1988 and 1992 Olympics. Yet when she speaks to groups of coaches, students and athletes across the country, she often notes that her greatest accomplishment was receiving her college diploma.

Sliney battles dyslexia, a learning disorder that affects a person’s ability to read and process words. She credits sports as a vehicle that helped her overcome challenges and believe in herself, areas she now focuses on as a national speaker and coach. Watch the short video above, then consider the following questions:

- What challenges do your athletes face, both in sports and outside of the team?
- How can you help them to "break down" their challenges? What small goals can they set and work toward in order to overcome larger challenges?
- How can you help your athletes change their "inner voice" and give them confidence to achieve their goals?

By assisting children to overcome challenges, we can help give them confidence that they can carry with them throughout their lives. Consider how you can use Molly’s example to build up your athletes, helping them to become champions in sports and life.
Coaches may recall that during their in-person Play Like a Champion clinic the importance of creating a plan for practices was emphasized. This should include what drills will be run, but also how the team will include prayer, implement team-building activities and have discussions regarding goals and moral issues. While we encourage coaches to come up with a plan that works for their own unique team, here's an example of how one youth coach is integrating the Play Like a Champion approach in her community.

Mary Vega coaches teams in multiple grades at a Kansas City area school and attended her first Play Like a Champion clinic a few years ago. Check out Mary's plan for an early season practice by clicking here, including a few moments for prayer, a moral discussion and a cool team tradition. Consider what your own plan should look like and create it today!

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**A Prayer for Coaches**

Lord, help me to be for these children a model of faith and love. Through my words and actions, may I show them what it means to be a Christian and how to live that faith through a participation in sports. May they know love through my caring for them personally and taking the time to help them grow in skill and virtue. Help me to be truly humble, that I might not be tempted by the pressure to win or to coach for my own sake, but always strive to do what is best for those you have entrusted to my care. Grant me the graces I need to help each of these children reach their absolute best in sport and in life, and give me the strength to remain steadfast in this commitment through the days and weeks to come. Amen.