

PLAY LIKE
A CHAMPION
TODAY

A Team for Every Child

Champion Parent Note

Educating and Forming Champion Parents

The Perils of Perfectionism



As more and more COVID-19 vaccine gets rolled out and into the arms of a tired, quarantined nation, sports should start to move to a “new normal” where individuals and teams can once again play the sports they love. With that thought in mind, today’s athlete note is aimed at a familiar topic: **perfectionism** in sports. For the most part, coaches love perfectionist athletes because of their strong work ethic and their coachability. Perfectionist athletes tend to be highly motivated, are committed to achieving

their individual and team goals, have a desire to improve, and want to be accepted by fellow athletes, coaches, friends and family. Are you this type of athlete?

If so, great, but be careful! On the other hand, research confirms that perfectionist athletes can lose confidence quickly when not performing well (or not receiving the approval they desire). They can be very self-critical of their performance, expecting to perform with zero errors, dwelling on mistakes and missed opportunities. They also can get stuck in a practice mentality – meaning that they expect everything to go according to plan as it often does in practice; and get unsettled when uncertainty rears its ugly head in competition, also as it often does.

Professor Robert W. Hill, of the Psychology Department at Appalachian State University, and creator of the *Perfectionism Inventory*, describes two types of perfectionism: **Conscientious Perfectionism** and **Self-Evaluative Perfectionism**, each with four characteristics.

Conscientious Perfectionism is characterized by:

- Organization
- Planning
- Seeking Excellence
- High Standards for Others.

All of these tend to be good things, as long as they don’t become obsessions.

Self-Evaluative Perfectionism is characterized by:

- Concern for Mistakes
- Need for Approval
- Perceived Parental Pressure (perception may not equal reality)
- Rumination
- The inability to let go of past events/mistakes.

Left unchecked, Self-Evaluative Perfectionism can become *toxic*, especially for a young (under age 21) athlete, often leading to giving up sports

altogether.

Sports psychologists suggest that the best way for athletes to avoid or deal with perfectionism is to:

1. Understand the disadvantages of perfectionism and accept that these absolute beliefs get in the way of their performance,
2. Identify beliefs/behaviors that support perfectionism and hurt confidence,
3. Replace the unhealthy beliefs that hurt confidence with a philosophy that helps confidence grow,
4. Make comparisons between their current and past performances (progress), not themselves and other athletes,
5. Accept that none of us are perfect, and strive to be THEIR best, and
6. Know that they are much MORE than their athletic performances.

Along with an emphasis on growth mindsets over fixed mindsets (See [last week's Coach Note](#)), the field of positive and sports psychology has been emphasizing **Mastery** over Perfection. [Click here to see a short video](#) on the subject on YouTube.

Athletes, learn to appreciate that mastery along with self-acceptance goes a long way toward athletic success.



A Hall of Fame Example



Consider the case of former NBA star, [Wilt Chamberlain](#). Chamberlain once scored 100 points in a single NBA game, which remains the NBA single-game record. He averaged 50.36 points per game in 1962, which also remains a single-season NBA record (by comparison, Michael Jordan averaged 37.09 ppg in his best year).

But Chamberlain was known as much for his inability to make free-throws as he was for his scoring prowess. He ranks number three in the *worst* free-throw shooting percentage category in NBA history. He accepted that he would never win any free-throw shooting awards, but he kept working at it, ignoring the taunts and bad press. When he came into the NBA, his free-throw shooting percentage was just over 40-percent. By the time he retired, he brought his percentage up to just over 51-percent. Not perfection, just steady work towards mastery and focus on leveraging his strengths. This is good lesson for today's athlete.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ~ 2 Corinthians 12:9

Nominate a Champion #CoachoftheWeek

Each week during the school year, *Play Like a Champion* recognizes a coach who has made an impact in their community and a difference in the lives of children. These are coaches at the youth and high school levels who serve as a model for others by developing athletes not just physically, but mentally, socially, emotionally and spiritually. We celebrate these men and women for their dedication to young athletes by naming them a Champion #CoachoftheWeek.



We need your help identifying individuals from your own community worthy of recognition. [Visit our Champion Coach of the Week website](#) to learn about past honorees, then email us to nominate a coach in your school or community. Please include a description of the individual, what makes them a great coach, and an image of the coach in action. We'll choose nominees to receive this award in a future week. Join us in our mission to recognize *Champion* coaches... Together we can celebrate those who provide a great experience for our children and serve as a model for other coaches across the country.

Email Us to Nominate a Champion Coach of the Week

A Prayer for Athletes



God, thank you for the gift of my family and the sacrifices they make so that I can play sports. Thank you for their love and support, thank you for the hours they spend driving me to practices and games, sitting in the stands, and lending an ear when I need to talk through a difficult situation. May they know how much this means to me and the impact it has on my ability to play the sports I love. I ask that you bless them today and always, keeping them safe and bringing them joy, just as they have brought me joy

through their support and love. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Play Like a Champion's "Daily Prayers for Champions" page has been updated! Visit www.playlikeachampion.org/daily-prayers 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

Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series
PO Box 72, Notre Dame, IN 46556 | information@playlikeachampion.org
www.playlikeachampion.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!