

# YouthFirst

## Coaches Learning About Youth Sports

The Sports Education and Leadership Program at UNLV

Grade 1-2 Girls In Sports

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### Enhancing Girls Self-Esteem

Coaches can positively influence self-esteem in girl athletics by designing practices and promoting sport and active living. Here are some ways that coaches can reinforce positive self-esteem.

- \* Avoid stereotyped comments, such as "don't act like a girl."
- \* Avoid comments about body shape and size.
- \* Encourage girls to declare boundaries and teach them when to say "no."

- \* Present yourself as a positive role model, practice what you preach.
- \* Make activities relevant for younger girls: focus on cooperation, relationships, fun and skill development.
- \* Decrease competitive situations during learning and demonstration at practice.
- \* Give men and women equal play time.
- \* Rotate roles and include everyone to participate.

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### Organize a Mother/Daughter Clinic

Girls feel less confident and supportive in sports than boys. Fathers traditionally played catch with their sons while the mother is usually not athletic as a child and does not know how to support their daughter in sports. Offer a clinic for mothers and daughters that focuses on drills mothers can do one-on-one with their daughter to teach sport skills. This should produce five valuable outcomes.

1. Shows mom how to provide her daughter with a head start on having a successful first sport experience.
2. Teaches mom a skill she never learned and makes her more confident about participating in the activity with her daughter.
3. Places mom in the position of playing the role coach/teacher and hopefully continuing that role in the near future.
4. Introduces girls to accomplished female role models.
5. Makes girls feel accepted and encouraged in their sport choice.

## Benefits of Girls Playing Sports

- \* Girls who play sports have a more positive body image than girls who do not participate in athletics.
- \* Research shows that physical activity is an effective tool for reducing the symptoms of stress and depression among female athletes.
- \* Playing sports teaches girls to be more aggressive and risk taking.
- \* Girls that participate in sports learn goal-setting and other critical skills necessary for success in the work place.
- \* Sports teaches girls team-work.
- \* Research shows that girls who participate in sports are more likely to do well academically.
- \* Regular activity decreases the likelihood of girls starting or trying smoking and will also reduce the risk for obesity.
- \* Teenage athletes are less likely to get pregnant than non-female athletes.
- \* Girls who exercise are happier, feel more energized, and are in better health than girls that do not exercise.
- \* Exercise can reduce or prevent osteoporosis, hyperlipidemia, breast cancer and cholesterol.
- \* Regular exercise improves the overall quality of a young girls life.

### Success Story: Cathy Rigby

Cathy Rigby was born December 12, 1952, two months premature. At age eight she took ballet lessons but loved to tumble and play on the trampoline. Since her body size was small she found gymnastics to come with ease. Her coach was Marquette who put her through some tremendous practices and training. Cathy after each school day would practice at the gym for four hours and put in seven to nine hours each Saturday and Sunday. Her favorite event was the beam routine because she was fearless and attempted many skills that others would only dream of. At age fifteen she qualified for the 1968 Olympics. At 4'10" and weighing only 89 pounds Cathy found her size an advantage. Cathy placed sixteenth overall, which was the highest position ever achieved by an American gymnast. Cathy worked hard for the upcoming

Olympics. The next Olympics was Munich in 1972 where every one was hoping for Cathy to bring home many medals. During her beam routine Cathy got flustered and fell off, ruining her chances at medalling and her Olympic dreams. Cathy placed 10th overall, still the best showing for the American team. It was Olga Korbut who won the medals that year. After the Olympics Cathy married Tommy Mason at the age of twenty and decided to give gymnastics a rest and pursue her education. Cathy will always remember the excitement, friendships, and the joys of gymnastics. She sparked ambition in thousands of younger girls throughout America. Cathy was happy knowing she had made gymnastics an important part of the world of American woman sports.