Mr. Gunnar
AP English Language and Composition

Sports Synthesis Prompt

Directions: The following prompt is based on these sources: the sports packet, the film clips, and the McMurtry essay.

This prompt requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. Synthesis refers to combining the sources and your position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing sources. *Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument. Avoid merely summarizing sources.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Introduction:
According to a position statement of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education developed by the Middle and Secondary School Physical Education Council, **inappropriate** practices for physical education programs include:

1. Teachers focus on production of full-scale competition and limit skill instruction.
2. Activities focus primarily on competition against other students.
3. Aggressive students are allowed to dominate activity.
4. Teachers allow some individuals, because of gender, skill level, or cultural characteristics, to be excluded from or limited in access to participation and learning.

Assignment:
Read the sources listed below (including any introductory information) carefully and consider the film clips. **Then in an essay, develop a position on the most important considerations schools and communities face when developing sports and physical education programs for public schools. Synthesize at least four of the sources for support. The essay should be at least 2 pages long.**

You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, Source B, etc.) or by the description in parenthesis.

Source A (Whitney) HO
Source B (Schwind-Pawlak) HO
Source C (Klosterman) HO
Source D (Trapp) HO
Source E (Callahan & Steptoe) HO
Source F (Ganz & Hassett) HO
Source G (McMurtry) *LOC*
Source H (*Go Tigers!)* film clip
Source I (*The Heart of the Game*) film clip

Source A
HERS; Playing to Win

By MARGARET A. WHITNEY

MARGARET A. WHITNEY IS A WRITER AND A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS AT RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE.

My daughter is an athlete. Nowadays, this statement won't strike many parents as unusual, but it does me. Until her freshman year in high school, Ann was only marginally interested in sport of any kind. When she played, she didn't swing hard, often dropped the ball, and had an annoying habit of tittering on field or court.

Indifference combined with another factor that did not bode well for a sports career. Ann was growing up to be beautiful. By the eighth grade, nature and orthodontics had produced a 5-foot-8-inch, 125-pound, brown-eyed beauty with a wonderful smile. People told her, too. And, as many young women know, it is considered a satisfactory accomplishment to be pretty and stay pretty. Then you can simply sit still and enjoy the unconditional positive regard. Ann loved the attention too, and didn't consider it demeaning when she was awarded "Best Hair," female category, in the eighth-grade yearbook.

So it came as a surprise when she became a jock. The first indication that athletic indifference had ended came when she joined the high-school cross-country team. She signed up in early September and ran third for the team within three days. Not only that. After one of those 3.1-mile races up hill and down dale on a rainy November afternoon, Ann came home muddy and bedraggled. Her hair was plastered to her head, and the mascara she had applied so carefully that morning ran in dark circles under her eyes. This is it, I thought. Wait until Lady Astor sees herself. But the kid with the best eighth- grade hair went on to finish the season and subsequently letter in cross-country, soccer, basketball and softball.

I love sports, she tells anyone who will listen. So do I, though my midlife quest for a doctorate leaves me little time for either playing or watching. My love of sports is bound up with the goals in my life and my hopes for my three daughters. I have begun to hear the message of sports. It is very different from many messages that women receive about living, and I think it is good.

My husband, for example, talked to Ann differently when he realized that she was a serious competitor and not just someone who wanted to get in shape so she'd look good in a prom dress. Be aggressive, he'd advise. Go for the ball. Be intense.

Be intense. She came in for some of the most scathing criticism from her dad, when, during basketball season, her intensity waned. You're pretending to play hard, he said. You like it on the bench? Do you like to watch while your teammates play?

I would think, how is this kid reacting to such advice? For years, she'd been told at home, at school, by countless advertisements, "Be quiet, Be good, Be still." When teachers reported that Ann was too talkative, not obedient enough, too flighty. When I dressed her up in frilly dresses and admonished her not to get dirty. When ideals of femininity are still, quiet, cool females in ads whose vacantness passes for sophistication. How can any adolescent girl know what she's up against? Have you ever really noticed intensity? It is neither quiet nor good. And it's definitely not pretty.

In the end, her intensity revived. At half time, she'd look for her father, and he would come out of the bleachers to discuss tough defense, finding the open player, squaring up on her jump shot. I'd watch them at the edge of the court, a tall man and a tall girl, talking about how to play.

Of course I'm particularly sensitive at this point in my life to messages about trying hard, being active, getting better through individual and team effort. Ann, you could barely handle a basketball two years ago. Now you're bringing the ball up against the press. Two defenders are after you. You must dribble, stop, pass. We're depending on you. We need you to help us. I wonder if my own paroxysms of uncertainty would be eased had more people urged me - be active, go for it!

Not that dangers don't lurk for the females of her generation. I occasionally run this horror show in my own mental movie theater: an unctuous but handsome lawyer-like drone of a young man spies my Ann. Hmmm, he says unconsciously to himself, good gene pool, and wouldn't she go well with my BMW and the condo? Then I see Ann with a great new hairdo kissing the drone goodbyehoney and setting off to the nearest mall with splendid-looking children to spend money.

But the other night she came home from softball tryouts at 6 in the evening. The dark circles under her eyes were from exhaustion, not makeup. I tried too hard today, she says. I feel like I'm going to puke.

After she has revived, she explains. She wants to play a particular position. There is competition for it. I can't let anybody else get my spot, she says, I've got to prove that I can do it. Later we find out that she has not gotten the much-wanted third-base position, but she will start with the varsity team. My husband talks about the machinations of coaches and tells her to keep trying. You're doing fine, he says. She gets that I-am-going-to-keep-trying look on her face. The horror-show vision of Ann-as-Stepford-Wife fades.

Of course, Ann doesn't realize the changes she has wrought, the power of her self-definition. I'm an athlete, Ma, she tells me when I suggest participation in the school play or the yearbook. But she has really caused us all to rethink our views of existence: her younger sisters who consider sports a natural activity for females, her father whose advocacy of women has increased, and me. Because when I doubt my own abilities, I say to myself, Get intense, Margaret. Do you like to sit on the bench? And my intensity revives. I am not suggesting that participation in sports is the answer for all young women. It is not easy - the losing, jealousy, raw competition and intense personal criticism of performance.

And I don't wish to imply that the sports scene is a morality play either. Girls' sports can be funny. You can't forget that out on that field are a bunch of people who know the meaning of the word cute. During one game, I noticed that Ann had a blue ribbon tied on her ponytail, and it dawned on me that every girl on the team had an identical bow. Somehow I can't picture the Celtics gathered in the locker room of the Boston Garden agreeing to wear the same color sweatbands.

No, what has struck me, amazed me and made me hold my breath in wonder and in hope is both the ideal of sport and the reality of a young girl not afraid to do her best.

I watch her bringing the ball up the court. We yell encouragement from the stands, though I know she doesn't hear us. Her face is red with exertion, and her body is concentrated on the task. She dribbles, draws the defense to her, passes, runs. A teammate passes the ball back to her. They've beaten the press. She heads toward the hoop. Her father watches her, her sisters watch her, I watch her. And I think, drive, Ann, drive.

http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DE5D6173EF930A35754C0A96E948260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print

Source B
The Thrill of Victory…The Agony of Parents

by Jennifer Schwind-Pawlak

We often get caught up in the moment. As children—and as adults—we first react to situations one way, and then later make better sense of what happened. Jennifer Schwind-Pawlak, who wrote the following essay for a college writing course, explores one of these moments from her past. As you read the essay, notice how Schwind-Pawlak uses her own particular experience to tap into a more universal one. From a new perspective, allowed for by the distance of time, she finds the positive value of what appeared back then to be a negative experience. In this essay, she stands back and talks about the experience, engaging the reader with key details, a mature writer's voice, and an important lesson.

Parents—one word that can strike mans' emotions in children when said aloud. Some children will smile and think about how silly their dad looked when he put carrot sticks up his nose that very morning, while others will cringe when they think about how their mother picked them up from school last week wearing orange polyester pants and a green shirt, oblivious to the hard work that some fellow went through to create the color wheel. My own emotional state of mind seemed to run the gamut throughout childhood. I chose to blame my parents for all of the traumatic events that unfolded but took pride in my obvious independence during the successes. One of the most heinous crimes that my parents committed was "the soccer foul." If I could have ejected them from the game of life at that point, I would have.

Ironically, I was not particularly fond of soccer. Being the youngest of four children, I often chose to run around the Field with friends while my brothers and sisters performed feats of soccer, the likes of which had only been seen during the World Cup. I would happily contort my fingers into chubby pretzels while singing "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" as the game's events were recounted on the drives home. Still, whether by guilt or by the need to belong, I joined the team when I became of age.

The team that I played on was designed to turn the young and awkward into the swans of the soccer held. Mv father (a one-time soccer- coach) explained several times that this was the time that I would learn the rules and workings of the game and that I shouldn’t expect much more than that. Since it was a child's league, learning and the team experience were the focuses. Winning was a pleasant bonus but should not be achieved at the cost of the main objectives. This litany was taken and stored somewhere in the recesses of my brain. For me, however, the main objective was looking cool while running down the field chasing a spotted ball. Everything else seemed secondary.

Due to the family history, I attended every Tuesday and Thursday practice and managed to make each a social occasion while going through the motions of the game. I succeeded in understanding the game and, though not the most skilled of players, began to enjoy the half game of playing time that was required by the league for each player. Though I was far from a star player, I felt that my contribution mattered to the overall outcomes of the games, all of which had been lost to this point,

Sunday, the morning of the fifth game of the season, came with no warning. I got up, went to church with the family, then came home to suit up for the game. Upon arrival at the

field, I was greeted by the coach and went to take my place along the sidelines with the rest of my team. There was a buzz of excitement that left me with the feeling that I would get when my brother would poke me with his fingertip after dragging his stocking feet across the carpet. The team that we were playing had a record identical to ours. We could win this game. I didn't care what the parents said. Winning would be a blast.

The coach kept me on the sidelines the entire first half of the game, which my pre-adolescent mind attributed to my obviously increasing skill at the game. He was saving his trump card, me, for the last half of the game. I knew this was rare, but I was sure that his reason was to bedazzle the crowd and the other team with my pure firepower on the field. The other players, except one other girl, continued to cycle in and out of the garlic. While I was excited because we were winning the game, I was concerned that the coach had forgotten about me. I inched, ever so slowly, toward him and started mindless conversation to let him know that I was there. He spoke to me, so I knew that he could not have forgotten about me. As the game was winding down, I was sure that he must have decided to put me in for the last play of the game.

The game ended.

I was horrified to realize that I had not played one moment of the first win of the season. After all of that practice and the ugly uniform, I was deemed such a poor player that I was not even good enough to play one moment of that game. How would I ever live this down at school? How would I face all of my classmates on Monday? My stomach began to churn, the way that it does when you are going down the first hill of any great roller coaster. I looked to my parents for support, which only added to the horror of that day.

Joann (the name I call my mother when she does something embarrassing) was screaming at the coach. In a voice so screeching that it rivaled fingernails on a blackboard, she told him that he was a disgraceful coach and that he should be ashamed of himself. She continued to point out the error of his ways by reminding him that I had not played at all in the game. How could she do this to me? My mother had managed to enlighten the few people that hadn't noticed on their own that I had not played at all. What was she thinking? She might as well have rented billboard space saying, "So what if Jeni sucks at soccer? The coach wouldn't let her play." My only thought was, "I don't want to go to school tomorrow!"

Looking back, I realize that it wasn't so bad the next day at school. I walked out to recess and talked about how nuts my mother was and everyone seemed to agree, sympathize, and get on with the important task of freeze tag. At that moment I wasn't sure that I would ever be able to forgive my mother for what happened that day, but, as far as I can recall, I began loving her again within the week. 1 am sure that she either cooked my favorite dinner, told a corny joke, or told me how much she loved me to make that lump of anger fade away.

I never went to soccer again. As a matter of fact, I never played another organized sport again. Maybe it was the fear of rejection. Maybe it was the uncertainty of my talent. Maybe 1 was just too busy with other things. I never really felt the urge to compete on that level after that day.

The relationship that I have with my parents has changed very much throughout the years. The polyester pants don't bother me anymore, but the carrot sticks still make me laugh. While their “soccer foul” embarrassed and angered me at the time, I understand and appreciate it now. My mother was angry FOR me. She was hurt FOR me. Through the pages of time, I can look back and see that, more often than not, I embarrassed her. She never stopped feeling for me, loving me, or protecting me. I have grown enough to realize that, though I often pointed out my parents fouls, they scored countless goals that I didn't even notice.

From: Mauk, John and John Metz: The Composition of Everyday Life, 2nd ed. Boston: Thomson, 2007 14-16.

Source C

On Soccer

by **Chuck Klosterman**

Like many U.S. citizens, I spend much of my free time thinking about the future of sports and the future of our children. This is because I care deeply about sports.

In the spirit of both, I've spent the last fifteen wears of my life railing against the game of soccer, an exercise that has been lauded as "the sport of the future" since 1977. Thankfully, that future dystopia has never come. But people continue to tell me that soccer will soon become part of the fabric of this country, and that soccer will eventually be as popular as football, basketball, karate, pinball, smoking, glue sniffing, menstruation, animal cruelty, photocopying, and everything else that fuels the eroticized, hyperkinetic zeitgeist of Americana. After the U.S. placed eighth in the 2002 World Cup tournament, team forward Clint Mathis said, “If we can turn one more person who wasn't a soccer fan into a soccer fan, we've accomplished something.” Apparently, that's all that matters to these idiots. They won't be satisfied until we’re all systematically brainwashed into thinking soccer is cool and that placing eighth is somehow noble. However, I know this will never happen. Not really. Dumb bunnies like Clint Mathis will be wrong forever and that might be the only thing saving us from ourselves.

My personal war against the so-called “soccer menace” probably reached its peak in 1995, when I was nearly fired from a college newspaper for suggesting that soccer was the reason thousands of Brazilians are annually killed at Quiet Riot concerts in Rice de Janeiro, a statement that is—admittedly—only half true. A few weeks after the publication of said piece, a petition to have me removed as the newspaper's sports editor was circulated by a ridiculously vocal campus organization called the Hispanic American Council, prompting an “academic hearing” where I was accused (with absolute seriousness) of libeling Pelé. If memory serves, I think my criticism of soccer and Quiet Riot was somehow taken as latently racist, although—admittedly—I'm not completely positive, as I was intoxicated for most of the monthlong episode. But the bottom line is that I am still willing to die a painful public death, assuming my execution destroys the game of soccer (or—at the very least—convinces people to shut up about it).

According to the Soccer Industry Council of America, soccer is the No. 1 youth participation sport in the U.S. There are more than 3.6 million players under the age of nineteen registered to play, and that number has been expanding at over 8 percent a year since 1990. There's also been a substantial increase in the number of kids who play past the age of twelve, a statistic that soccer proponents are especially thrilled about. “These are the players that will go on to be fans, referees, coaches, adult volunteers, and players in the future,” observed Virgil Lewis, chairman of the United States Youth Soccer Association.

Certainly, I can't argue with Virgil’s math: I have no doubt that battalions of Gatorade-stained children are running around the green wastelands of suburbia, randomly kicking a black-and-white ball in the general direction of tuna netting. However, Lewis's larger logic is profoundly flawed. There continues to be this blindly optimistic belief that all of the brats playing soccer in 2003 are going to be crazed MSBL fans in 2023, just as it was assumed that eleven-year-old soccer players in 1983 would be watching Bob Costas provide play-by-play for

indoor soccer games right now. That will never happen. We will never care about soccer in this country. And it's not just because soccer is inherently un-American, which is what most soccer haters (Frank Deford, Jim Rome, et al.) tend to insinuate. It's mostly because soccer is inherently geared toward Outcast Culture.

On the surface, one might assume that would actually play to soccer's advantage, as America has plenty of outcasts. Some American outcasts are very popular, such as OutKast. But Outcast Culture does not meld with Intimidation Culture, and the latter aesthetic has always been a cornerstone of team sports. An outcast can be intimidating in an individual event—Mike Tyson and John McEnroe are proof—but they rarely thrive in the social environment of a team organism (e.g., Duane Thomas, Pete Maravich, Albert Belle, et al.). Unless you're Barry Bonds, being an outcast is antithetical to the group concept. But soccer is the one sport that's an exception to that reality: Soccer unconsciously rewards the outcast, which is why so many adults are fooled into thinking their kids love it. The truth is that most children don't love soccer; they simply hate the alternatives more. For 60 percent of the adolescents in any fourth-grade classroom, sports are a humiliation waiting to happen. These are the kids who play baseball and strike out four times a game. These are the kids who are afraid to get fouled in basketball, because it only means they're now required to shoot two free throws, which equates to two air balls. Basketball games actually *stop* to recognize their failure. And football is nothing more than an ironical death sentence; somehow, outcasts find themselves in a situation where the people normally penalized for teasing them are suddenly urged to *annihilate* them.

This is why soccer seems like such a respite from all that mortification; it's the one aerobic activity where nothingness is expected. Even at the highest levels, every soccer match seems to end 1-0 or 2-1. A normal eleven-year-old can play an entire season without placing toe to sphere and nobody would even notice, assuming he or she does a proper job of running about and avoiding major collisions. Soccer feels "fun" because it's not terrifying—it's the only sport where you can't [screw] up. An outcast can succeed simply by not failing, and public failure is every outcast's deepest fear. For society's prepubescent pariahs, soccer represents safety.

However, the demand for such an oasis disappears once an outcast escapes from the imposed slavery of youth athletics; by the time they reach ninth grade, it's perfectly acceptable to just quit the team and shop at Hot Topic. Most youth soccer players end up joining the debate team before they turn fifteen. Meanwhile, the kind of person who truly loves the notion of sports (and—perhaps sadly—unconsciously *needs* to have sports in their life) doesn't want to watch a game that's designed for losers. They're never going to care about a sport where announcers inexplicably celebrate the beauty of missed shots and the strategic glory of repetitive stalemates. We want to see domination. We want to see athletes who don't look like us, and who we could never be. We want to see people who could destroy us, and we want to feel like that desire is normal. But those people don't exist in soccer; their game is dominated by mono-monikered clones obsessed with falling to their knees and ripping off their clothes. I can't watch a minute of professional soccer without feeling like I'm looking at a playground of desperate, depressed fourth-graders, all trying to act normal and failing horribly.

In short, soccer players kind of remind me of "my guys."

Now, when I say "my guys," I don't mean kids who are actually *mine*, as I am not father material (or human material, or even Sleestak material). When I say "my guys," I am referring to a collection of scrappy, rag-tag, mostly unremarkable fourth- and fifth-graders I governed when I was sixteen years old. During the summer in 1988, I worked as a totally unqualified Little League baseball coach. This is noteworthy for one reason and one reason only: I remain the only

youth sports instructor in the history of my town who was ever fired, a distinction that has made me both a legend and an antihero (at least among "my guys"). And even though I happened to be coaching the game of baseball that summer, this was the experience that galvanized my hatred for the game of soccer—and particularly my hatred for the ideology that would eventually become the Youth Soccer Phenomenon. …

From: Klosterman, Chuck. Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs. New York: Scribner, 2004: 86-90.

Source D

Human Targets

By Mark Trapp

The *Washington Times* reported last week that school districts in several Maryland counties are considering banning "dodge ball." Dodge ball is a game in which children throw big rubber balls at each other in an attempt to eliminate players on the opposing team by hitting them with the ball. What, you ask, is so bad about this game, a favorite of children for decades? According to the Cecil County school board, "activities requiring human targets" are not appropriate for physical education.

The school board is going to vote soon on whether to ban dodge ball. Don't they realize that football also requires a "human target?" So do baseball, basketball, boxing, wrestling, and many other sports. I'm sure those are next up for elimination. The director of education services stated that, "We don't want any kind of game that is exclusionary. We don't want anything that keeps you out and waiting." In other words, because some people get hit in dodge ball and must then sit out, the whole game must be scrapped. How about baseball? Are these people going to change the rules so that nobody makes an out and must sit in the dugout? Will everybody bat at once, so no one is kept "out and waiting?"

Good grief. Has this country's educational system become so screwed up that kids can no longer play dodge ball because it encourages "acts of aggression?" Apparently it has. Instead of teaching this country's children to learn competition and develop character through sports, our schools are more intent on promoting self-esteem. Remember several years ago, when the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association announced that all of its teams would not keep score in their soccer tournaments? They also instituted a policy that if any child got a trophy, every child also had to receive a trophy. The leader of this group, Dean Conway, called the idea of not keeping score a "non-results-oriented initiative." They felt that their sports programs had become too competitive, and having winners and losers only served to make the losers feel bad.

Folks, it just doesn't get much more stupid than that. How did Dean Conway ever get his job? Did he have to compete with other applicants? Didn't he realize that someone who didn't get the same job might feel bad? What about the applicants who were turned down for his prestigious position? Didn't he understand that if he got to lead such a wonderful organization, everybody should have been allowed to do so? How did he justify the results-oriented approach to his selection as head honcho of the MYSA?

In my mind, kids should be encouraged to vent some aggression once in a while in a good, clean game of dodge ball, soccer or anything else. Not only that, they should be allowed to keep score in order to determine who won or lost. And if the losers feel bad, they should - they lost. However, the idea that some poor kid's self-esteem is going to suffer because his team lost a

soccer game to another group of six-year olds is laughable. Kids realize that you win some, you lose some. Life goes on.

When I was in second grade, my teacher Ms. Anderson, always allowed us to play kick ball at recess. She would even be the pitcher. I remember many times when my team would be winning by a wide margin, and the other team would start to complain to Ms. Anderson. She would end up telling them that they could choose one player from the other team to even things out. It seemed like I was always chosen to finish the game on the losing team. Thus, I lost all the time. But did my self-esteem suffer? No - in fact, the few times that we came back and actually won the game were some of my best memories of second grade.

A group called the National Association for Sport and Physical Education has inducted dodge ball, along with "Duck, duck, goose" and kick ball into its "Physical Education Hall of Shame." The group for discouraging these games gives several reasons. For example, dodge ball is too aggressive, duck, duck, goose excludes too many children (because some of them aren't picked as often as others), and kick ball puts batters on display for possible embarrassment, excludes girls, and stronger throwers can toss the ball too hard at weaker classmates. I wonder how many of the people in charge at the NASPE were the "weaker classmates" when they were children? This organization is the ultimate Revenge of the Nerds - it's a bunch of adults who couldn't compete as kids. Apparently, they still can't compete; or else they would have real jobs that actually offered a contribution to society, instead of endeavoring to eliminate competition and create a nation of wimps.

These people who seek to eliminate competition from children's sports are doing a disservice to the children they are supposed to be helping. One day, these kids will grow up and find out that in the real world, people keep score. People expect results. Not only that, but not everyone gets a trophy - some people make more money than others. Doctors make more than street bums, in spite of the fact that this makes the bums feel bad. I wonder if the NASPE pays every employee the same amount, so as not to damage the "weaker employees" self-esteem?

If children are never allowed to fail, they will never succeed. If children are told that they can't keep score in a soccer game because it might make the losers feel bad, how can we justify grading their homework? Won't the kids who don't do as well feel bad? Won't these grades cause the less intelligent kids to feel embarrassed?

Although the leader of the soccer group called his scheme "non-results-oriented initiative," I've got a better name. It is a name that sums up all of these programs - whether they seek to stop aggressive dodge ball, competitive soccer, or the embarrassment and shame of losing a game of kick ball. It perfectly describes the idea that competitive sports are an evil that must be eradicated, lest our children's self-esteem suffer because they actually lost a game of youth soccer. It is also an apt description for the non-competitive, non-score-keeping, non-aggressive, non-winning, non-losing, high-self-esteem kids our schools are churning out. We can simply call these programs "No Balls." Don't worry - these "no balls" kids will still have bright futures ahead of them, in spite of the fact that they will not be prepared in any way to compete in our job markets. They will all have jobs waiting for them at places like the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association and the Cecil County school board. ESR

Mark Trapp is a regular contributor to Enter Stage Right.

http://www.enterstageright.com/archive/articles/1200sports.htm

Source E

An End Too Soon.

(Suicide victim Sarah Devens)

Gerry Callahan; Sonja Steptoe.

Another long, exhausting practice would end, and her teammates would scatter like kids stepping off a school bus, rushing to the locker room, the library, the parties, the rest of their lives on the campus of Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H. Sarah Devens would stay put. The Devil, as they called her, would just keep going, running laps, taking shots, pushing a little harder than everyone else. "The Devil was amazing," says her close friend and former coach Heather Crutchfield. "She was hyper and crazy and just so alive. She never slowed down."

Devens played on three varsity teams at Dartmouth--field hockey, ice hockey and lacrosse--and the 5'4", 125-pounder was named a captain of all three. She seemed to go from game to game and practice to practice without coming up for air. One athletic season ran into the next, and the end of the school year meant the beginning of camps and clinics.

She told friends that she wanted to take a break, but she didn't dare. How could she? She was Sarah Devens, the best female athlete Dartmouth ever had. She was never the richest or the smartest kid in her class, but when the games began, no one was better. How could she quit sports? Sports was probably the reason she was there, in the Ivy League, at the top of the academic ladder. The teams needed her. The school needed her. She was Dartmouth's Tasmanian devil in a do-rag, indefatigable in practice and competition. She never slowed down.

"People think sports is so much fun, but it's not always like that," says Daphne Clark, who had known Devens since kindergarten. "Sarah couldn't just go out and enjoy herself. She had to be great. If you're the Devil, people expect perfection."

Of Devens, they may have expected too much. In early July she returned from a field hockey camp in Maryland and was preparing to travel to Boulder, Colo., for the Olympic Festival. In addition, she had made the U.S. "B" team; naturally, she wanted to be on the first team. She was disappointed and depressed, but most of all, her friends say, she was exhausted. She was tired of trying to be everything to everyone. "In her mind, quitting probably would have seemed selfish," says George Crowe, the women's ice hockey coach at Dartmouth.

Last week, in her bedroom at her father's house in Essex, Mass., she took a .22-caliber rifle and killed herself with a shot to the chest. The Devil couldn't outrun her demons. At age 21, about to begin her senior year in college, Sarah Devens finally slowed down.

Devens's sophomore year was winding down when the Dartmouth lacrosse team's season came to an end. For a few days she had no practice, no games. Some friends asked her if she wanted to go mountain biking, and she jumped at the chance. "She called me and said it was just the most fun thing she had done at school," says Blair Linen, a friend from high school. "She said she saw all this beautiful woods and wilderness around the campus that she had never seen before."

Devens had spent much of her life on a field or in a rink. She grew up in an athletic family. Her paternal grandfather, Charles Devens, pitched for the New York Yankees in the early '30s. Her mother, Sally Willard, coached Sarah in both field hockey and lacrosse in elementary

school. Sarah learned to play ice hockey with her father, Charles Jr., and her two brothers, and she was the captain of the boys' hockey team in junior high. She was twice named the outstanding female athlete at her boarding school, St. Paul's, in Concord, N.H.

When it came time to apply to college, Sarah had a short, impressive list--Dartmouth and Harvard. Her father was a Harvard graduate, and many of her friends from St. Paul's were heading to Ivy League schools. Sarah wanted to attend the best, and if her grades and test scores wouldn't open the door--"Let's just say her SATs were not spectacular," says one friend--surely her athletic skills would. No one doubted that she could handle the athletic rigors of college, but some of her friends wonder if Sarah would have been better off in a less competitive academic environment.

The same qualities that made Devens a star on the playing field made her life in the classroom difficult. She could not sit still or slow down, and she seemed to have trouble accepting her own limitations. Devens was far from a failure in the classroom, but academics did not come easily.

"She just didn't enjoy sitting in class," says Dartmouth field hockey coach Julie Dayton. "She was hyperactive. She had so much energy. She was bright and perceptive, but sitting in a classroom wasn't her preferred way to learn."

"It was a struggle for Sarah," says Clark, her childhood friend who now attends Harvard. "She's a year ahead of me, and when I went to Harvard, I was thinking about playing three sports. I talked to her, and she said, 'No way. Don't do it. It's just not fun.'"

The story is cut right out of a novel: A privileged young woman has everything but happiness. Devens grew up in the comfortable coastal town of Essex, 45 minutes north of Boston. Her blood could not have been bluer. She is a descendant of Charles Devens, a major general in the Union Army during the Civil War and later a U.S. attorney general. A statue of General Devens stands at the Esplanade on the banks of the Charles River in Boston.

Sarah's parents were divorced when she was in grade school, but Sarah long ago "came to terms" with it, says Crutchfield. Her father, who works in real estate, stayed in Essex, and her mother, a masseuse, moved to nearby Ipswich. Sarah split her time between the two homes.

She had enough best friends to stretch from Ipswich to Hanover and back again. There were nearly 1,000 people at her funeral in her hometown and another 300 at a memorial service at Dartmouth. They told stories of a vibrant young woman who loved to play jokes and have fun with friends; of a girl who, as a first-grader, took the hand of a frightened kindergartner who was clinging to her mother and said, "I'll take care of it from here."

They spoke with great love and passion of the Devil--a nickname that not only sounded like her surname but also described her personality. It was a term of endearment, as in "lovable little devil." She was a mischief-maker, but always with the aim of helping a pal. "It seemed she was everyone's older sister," Dayton says. "She made the bus driver who took us on road trips a part of the team. By the end of a meal, she knew the waitress's favorite music and how many kids she had."

While her own family does not have the boundless wealth of some of Sarah's classmates, they still have clout. According to a source, The Boston Globe quashed a follow-up story on her death when the Devens family made an arrangement with the publisher of the newspaper. The family reportedly agreed not to speak to any other publication if the Globe backed off the story.

Sarah hated reading about herself, and her friends say she was almost obsessively modest. When she started gaining a measure of fame at Dartmouth, it became harder for her to

enjoy herself. "She never even told me that she was voted All-America in lacrosse," says Scott Dolesh, who was her boyfriend. "When I asked her why, she said, 'Oh, it's no big deal.'"

When she was named co-winner of the Class of '76 Award during her sophomore year, presented annually to the best female athlete at Dartmouth, Devens worried about the expectations that awaited her over the next two years. What could she do to top that?

"The more publicity she got, the less she liked it," says Crutchfield. "She got letters and had stories written about her, and that just made her feel like she was playing for everyone else. She wanted to quit one sport and take time off, but she felt like that would be letting everyone down."

Lacrosse was her least favorite sport, but it was probably the game at which she was most dominant. How could she quit? This past year she was an All-America. She was also named first-team All-Ivy League in field hockey and second team in ice hockey, which was the game she loved the most. She loved the speed, the excitement of outskating everyone else, and she would hurtle down the ice with reckless abandon in search of either the puck or a passing lane. Her friends say she was crushed last January when she traveled to Lake Placid, N.Y., to try out for the women's national team and failed to make it. Women's ice hockey will debut at the '98 Winter Olympics, and Devens had dreamed of winning a gold medal.

Last August, The Dartmouth, the school newspaper, asked Devens about her demanding schedule. Her answer showed her conflict. While she described her life as "definitely stressful," she admitted that she would have trouble giving up a sport. "It's very intense," she said. "There's not much time to hang out. But I don't know if I would be happy if I quit a team. Part of me wishes I could take a break, but I want to be there, to keep playing."

Her coaches say they encouraged Devens to take breaks, but she refused. It was one of the paradoxes in her young life. She would return home in the summer and complain of exhaustion before heading off to compete in a triathlon.

"I remember last year when we established a policy that she had to take a week off between seasons and relax, and we all laughed because we knew she wouldn't," says Dayton. "Sure enough, somebody would see her running laps in the gym."

Devens sought help from a string of counselors as she went from game to game, season to season. She finally found a counselor she liked and had begun showing up at games with a music tape she had been given to relax. But she kept playing.

Off the field, too, Devens tried to be all things to all people, and always with a smile or a laugh. "She said she wanted to be the best girlfriend, the best athlete, the best student," says Dolesh. But in her own mind, it seemed, she could never do enough. She would have lunch with someone she met at the rink after a game, drop off a bag of caramel cremes to Dayton, visit a friend in the hospital, mail a gag gift and fire off a dozen E-mail messages--all between classes and practices.

Even as her friends celebrated her life, some stopped short of expressing complete shock at her death. "It is an awful, awful shame," says one friend. "But Sarah had her struggles."

Her friends say that in the spring of 1994 Devens seemed to struggle emotionally, and Dolesh says they broke up briefly. "She said it was because she couldn't be in a relationship at the time," he says. "She couldn't explain why. I know she was down and depressed."

But that time passed, and friends said that they hoped Sarah had resolved whatever was troubling her. They noticed she was quieter but thought she was looking forward to the Olympic Festival. Devens was a psychology major and spoke of teaching or coaching but had no definite

plans for life after Dartmouth. "We talked about going out West and starting a ranch," says Linen. "Or just getting away and being ski bums for a year."

On Monday morning, July 10, Devens called a childhood friend and invited her to go mountain biking. They agreed to meet, but when Sarah didn't show, the friend drove to the Devenses' house, a large wooden structure with the year "1803" above the front door. The friend found Sarah's body and called the police.

There are no answers and little consolation for those still struggling to understand. "The thing is, she was so good at everything, as a person and an athlete, that she got on this vicious cycle," says Crowe. "She wanted to please everybody, and she couldn't stop. She wanted to rest, and this was the only way she knew how."

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Source F

Little League, Huge Effect

By Scott Ganz and Kevin Hassett From the May/June 2008 Issue of The American
How youth sports shape the economic, academic, and social prospects of Americans.

When pundits discuss the influence of sports on American culture, they often emphasize the negatives: Michael Vick and dogfighting; the steroids scandals in baseball; lewd fan behavior in football; doping incidents in cycling and track. But below the radar of popular athletic culture is something that has profoundly shaped the lives of millions of Americans for the better: youth sports. A growing body of research is showing the social and economic benefits of participation in youth sports to be surprisingly large and overwhelmingly positive. Other things being equal, if a kid plays sports, he will earn more money, stay in school longer, and be more engaged in civic life.

To understand how and why this might be so, consider the case of Sandy Brown, who works with the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), a national nonprofit organization that aims to improve the quality of youth coaching in America. As a youngster, Brown was frequently in trouble and had been kicked out of school for fighting and other unruly behavior. But Brown's life was turned around by a grade school principal and football coach named Bill Spencer. According to the PCA website, Spencer confronted his difficult new student one day and said, "Brown, I know what your problem is." Sandy thought he knew what was coming next, because he had heard this speech so many times before: *"You're no good; you'll never amount to anything."* But Spencer saw something else in the young man—potential. "Brown, you get into fights all the time because you want to compete. You have the heart of a winner."

Brown went on to play football for Spencer and had an impressive career. He is now a legendary coach at the Giddings State School, a youth detention facility in Giddings, Texas. Brown molds groups of violent young offenders into disciplined and winning football teams. Having won three state championships in the second-largest classification of the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools, he is regularly recruited by other "normal" schools, but feels his job at Giddings is too rewarding to relinquish.

Almost all of life in a capitalist society involves some form of competition. Young athletes learn the formula for success in a market-based system.

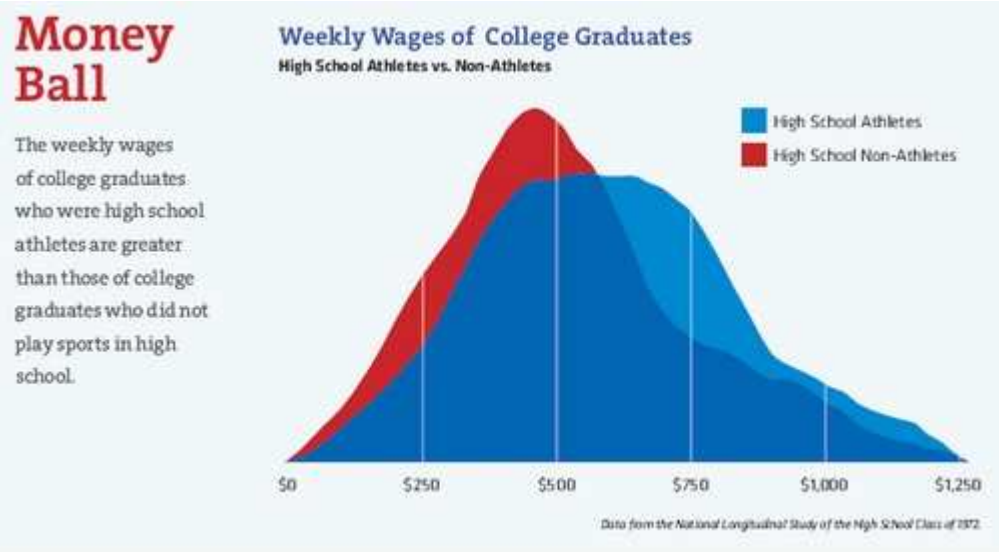
Brown takes kids who have committed heinous crimes and gives them hope. And he does that by making the game a metaphor for life. In a speech he delivered to his players in 1997 that was recounted in a Sports Illustrated profile, Brown said, "You boys had some tough breaks in life. You had judges who locked you up. You had parents who kicked your behinds and didn't give you the love you wanted. But let me tell you something: What happens to you tonight is up to you. You're the only ones out here who can change yourselves for the better…. You've got to stand up. Do you hear me? You've got to stand up and be a man, or bow your head and be a loser."

Feel-good stories such as this help illustrate a larger point. An increasing quantity of research suggests that people like Spencer, Brown, and other youth coaches have a major impact on the lives of their charges. One study, by economists John M. Barron and Glen R. Waddell of Purdue University and Bradley T. Ewing of Texas Tech University, examines a series of surveys taken by American males who attended high school in the 1970s. It found that high school athletes achieved a level of education 25 to 35 percent higher than their non-athlete classmates.

It's not just educational achievement that correlates with youth-sports participation. Barron, Waddell, and Ewing also found that high school athletes had 12 to 31 percent higher wages than their non-athlete counterparts. And when the wages of college graduates who were high school athletes is compared with those who were not, the athletes generally made higher wages—on average, $73 more per week. It's pretty clear that athletes win in the workplace, too.

Athletics also seems to give a bigger edge to students than other activities, such as band, student government, or theater. In another paper, Ewing estimates that, all else equal, athletes earn roughly 6 percent more than non-athletes, translating into around $1,000 per year extra wages.

Of course, it's possible that participation in athletics is just a proxy for other talents and abilities. Maybe sports do not really have a beneficent effect at the margin; perhaps it's just that more able people tend to participate in sports.



To investigate this possibility, Barron, Waddell, and Ewing also control for a number of variables in order to see if athletes are higher achievers because they share some other common characteristic. The authors examine IQ test results and standardized test scores and find that an

"athlete premium" remains even after controlling for intelligence. In other words, if you take two kids who have the same IQ and put one in a sports program, he will have a better future.

Athletes are also more active citizens, a 2006 study found. Economists Mark Hugo Lopez and Kimberlee Moore of the University of Maryland examined the effect of participation in sports on civic engagement. After controlling for factors such as age, educational attainment, and income, they found that athletes are 15 percent more likely to be registered to vote, 14 percent more likely to watch the news, and 8 percent more likely to feel comfortable speaking in public (and, for public speaking, the effect on females is twice as large).

Why would participation in sports be associated with many benefits? Distinguished sports historian Allen Guttmann provides a clue. He notes that ancient sports were highly religious affairs, and competition was organized in order to please the gods. Modern sports, however, have an entirely different character. Guttmann comments, "Once the gods have vanished from Mount Olympus or from Dante's paradise, we can no longer run to appease them or to save our souls, but we can set a new record. It is a uniquely modern form of immortality."

Small tastes of that immortality are available to today's athletes at many levels. Indeed, we speak from personal experience. What we have learned coaching youth baseball suggests why sports, especially modern team sports, can be so transformative.

For starters, one thing we have noticed is that no matter how low the stakes, the participants' emotional attachment to competition is intense. There seems to be little distinguishable difference between the transcendent joy of a World Series victor and a local Little League champion. A kid who has never had a hit in his life will feel like a Major League all-star when he rounds first base after his first line-drive up the middle. It's doubtful there is a former Little Leaguer around who doesn't rate his first home run as one of the happiest moments of his childhood.

When citizens believe that hard work determines success, they tend to build leaner governments. Americans are very different from Europeans in this regard.

A coach does not have to teach a kid to care about winning. Indeed, the problem is the reverse. The youth coach's role is to focus on sportsmanship, effort, and excellence precisely because the obsession over the outcome is so innate and so strong.

But since individuals care so much about the outcome, they experience—perhaps in a way that is unprecedented in a young life—a desire for excellence. Once this fire is lit, the change in the behavior of kids on a team can be extraordinary. Parents do not have to hound kids to practice. They do so voluntarily. And when they do, they almost always improve.

The positive feedback between effort and results can then lead to snowballing commitments to excellence. One particularly successful cohort in our league, for example, consisted of kids who would organize informal practices at the local ball field. If you drove past the park on the way home from work, the odds were pretty good that half a dozen 12-year-olds would be on the diamond, working out.

This lesson—that hard work can lead to excellence—is one that can transform lives. Almost all of life in a capitalist society involves some form of competition. Young athletes learn the formula for success in a market-based system. And the evidence says they outperform their peers throughout their lifetimes.

A recent scholarly paper by economists Alberto Alesina and Edward Glaeser of Harvard University and Bruce Sacerdote of Dartmouth College found that countries tend to build large welfare states when citizens believe that success in life is largely determined by luck. When

citizens believe that hard work determines success, they tend to build leaner and more economically efficient governments.

Americans are remarkably different from Europeans in this regard. If you ask Americans whether the economically disadvantaged are poor because they are lazy or unlucky, 60 percent say lazy. If you ask Europeans, only 26 percent finger laziness. Alesina and his colleagues argue that these attitudes shape society by shaping governmental and social institutions.

But why do these attitudes exist? A big part of the answer may be found in sports. A 1999 study by developmental psychologists Françoise D. Alsaker and August Flammer found American children spend more time participating in athletics than Europeans. In certain cases—America compared with France, for instance—the gap is quite substantial. A 1996 study by Michigan State University sports psychologist Martha E. Ewing and Vern D. Seefeldt, former director of the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, found that 45 percent of all eligible American youths play in an agency-sponsored league, like Little League baseball or Pop Warner football. That is 22 million children each year who get an infusion of the American work ethos.

Americans learn on the ball field or in the gym that effort and success are connected. Convinced that effort matters, we extend more effort, and celebrate and protect the fruits of effort.

Why have Americans been unwilling to build a European welfare state? Because they believe that income differences are largely attributable to effort difference. Why do they believe that effort matters? Maybe it's because they play Little League.

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