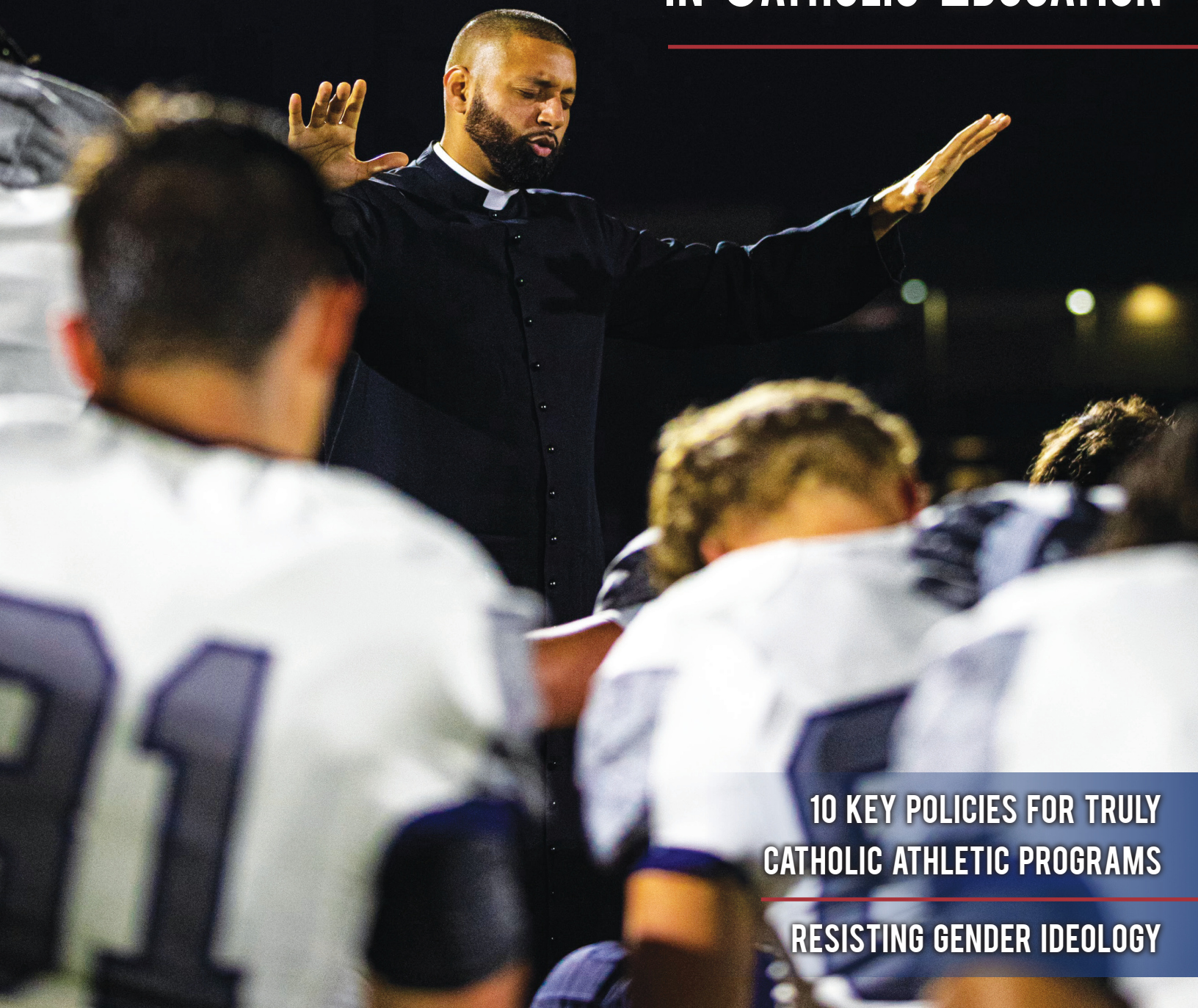


OUR CATHOLIC MISSION

TRUTH AND FIDELITY IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

SPRING 2022

THE ROLE OF SPORTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION



10 KEY POLICIES FOR TRULY
CATHOLIC ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

RESISTING GENDER IDEOLOGY



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THE CARDINAL NEWMAN SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1879, MERRIFIELD, VIRGINIA 22116
(703) 367-0333

SPRING 2022 ISSUE

In this Issue

Coaches and athletic directors rarely find much time to consider the higher purpose of sports in Catholic schools. It's easy to get caught up in ordering uniforms, managing facilities and scheduling practices and forget about the bigger picture.

In a sport event, students should be trying to win the game or match while playing in a virtuous manner. But even more important to practice and competition is the integral formation of student-athletes in mind, body and soul.

When done well, sports are such a blessing! They contribute to the mission of Catholic education and help form students in virtue, as explained in the editorial on the facing page.

There are certain principles that should guide sports in Catholic schools, which are included in new policy standards on sports released by The Cardinal Newman Society and available on our website. Dr. Dan Guernsey, education policy editor and senior fellow, breaks down these principles in the article beginning on page four.

How can these principles about sport be put into practice? Look no further than the article on page six that outlines 10 ways you can strengthen Catholic identity in your athletic program.

On page eight, we include one coach's reflection on how sport builds virtue, and on page 10 is an article by Patrick Reilly, president, on the importance of resisting gender ideology in sports. Gender ideology is one of the greatest threats to sports today, and Catholic educators must be prepared to reject its influence. **OCM**

If you have any questions or comments or would like digital copies of Our Catholic Mission to share with your staff and others in Catholic education, please visit NewmanSociety.org/OCM or email Programs@CardinalNewmanSociety.org

Sport Is More than a Game for Catholic Students

In Catholic education, athletes like to win competitions as much as anyone else—but sport has an even higher purpose that should take priority for students and coaches.

Sport done rightly aids the development of character and virtue. Catholic sport allows for the integral formation of body and soul, to work toward the fulfillment of athletic and intellectual prowess and excellence. Sport builds school community, reinforcing bonds among students and between students, faculty and staff. Sport forges bonds among parents and the larger community.

Sport in Catholic education is not only for the physically talented. Because it has so much to offer the human person, all capable students should have the benefit of participating in athletics and sporting competitions. What student hasn't missed catching or hitting a ball? It's not only about learning hand-eye coordination, but also about how to emotionally respond and behave in a way that leads to virtue formation.

As stated in The Cardinal Newman Society's new standards on sports in Catholic education, a Catholic institution should be concerned not only with "physical

skills and strength" but also developing social skills and "Christian character and virtue." The standards discuss the outlook of Pope St. John Paul II, who spoke of the importance of sport in the development of the human person as well as the danger if sport is simply "reduced to mere effort and to a questionable, soulless demonstration of physical strength."

Sport can help students recognize their physical and mental capacities and limitations. For some, it's the acceptance of their skill; for others, it's the determination to improve, which motivates them to understand who they are or who they are called to be.

“ALL CAPABLE STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE THE BENEFIT OF PARTICIPATING IN ATHLETICS.”

Some believe gender is a social construct, and that athletic policies should invite students who express a gender different from their biological sex ("transgendered athletes") to compete alongside or against athletes of a different biological sex. But science tells us there

are chromosomes within each human person that exist *at conception* defining one's sex as either male or female. The Church teaches that the human person grows as a unified body and soul, not as "two natures united, but a single nature" as male or female. As our standards explain, "Through integral and holistic Catholic education, student-athletes will

come to understand who they are as unified persons of body and soul [and] as sons and daughters of God." Sport can be important to upholding the perennial teachings of the Church and the mission of the Catholic school or college.

Catholic institutions of integrity will recognize natural law and Catholic teaching, refusing to capitulate to contemporary ideologies that negate the basic binary principle of human sexuality. Faithful Catholic institutions will participate in like-minded athletic associations or sports leagues that do not usurp the rights of students to compete with students of the same biological sex. This is a matter of justice. Our standards state, "By nature, men are typically bigger, faster and stronger than women and so should not play against them in competitive interschool athletics." Any athletic competition should protect the safety and dignity of all participants.

It is important that educators ensure that students are not degraded by unsportsmanlike behavior, such as name-calling or hazing, and "coaching that is physically, emotionally or spiritually abusive, harmful or degrading."

Sport in a Catholic school is the extension of the school's academic and religious mission—to transform students into persons who will live their earthly and eternal lives as humble servants of God. It should be seen as an evangelical and formative program.

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Catholic Education Preserves Traditional Sport

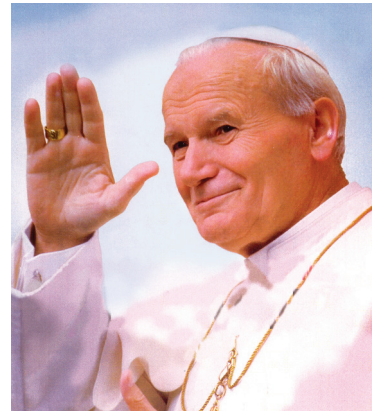
by Dan Guernsey

Every sport seeks a champion, someone to lead their team to success and model excellence on and off the field.

Today, much of the sporting world—from the Olympics to professional sports, and reaching into school and college athletics—seems dangerously obsessed with fame, politics and gender ideology. But faithful Catholic education is shining a light by standing firm in defense of student-athletes and refusing to yield to social pressure and false claims about the body and human nature.

By instilling virtue and forming athletes morally and socially, many Catholic schools and colleges stand out even more from their secular counterparts. Catholic education is the champion for traditional sport that is so greatly needed today.

In Catholic education, sports are never separated from the mission of sanctity, service and integral formation of the mind, body and spirit. This is part of education's purpose as professed at Vatican II, to provide "a public, enduring and pervasive influence of the Christian mind in the furtherance of culture."



"Everything in a Catholic educational institution must serve its mission of seeking and teaching truth, the sanctification of its students, and service to society," affirms The Cardinal Newman Society's recently published policy standards on sports in Catholic education. Catholic athletics leaders across the country provided input into the standards to guide policies that uphold the dignity of the person and the mission of Catholic schools and colleges.

“SPORTS, WHEN DONE WELL, CAN HELP ACHIEVE THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION.”

"The goals of a Catholic institution's sports program include student-athlete growth in physical skills and strength, growth in Christian character and virtue, and becoming a selfless and supportive member of a community," the standards explain. "Through integral and ho-

listic Catholic education, student-athletes will come to understand who they are as unified persons of body and soul, as sons and daughters of God, and as responsible members of a community."

Principles of Catholic athletics

Catholic education is interested in sport, because the Church is interested in the human person.

“While classrooms lend themselves to development of the mind and spirit, sport is particularly valuable for forming the whole person,” suggest the new standards. “Rightly understood, sport is capable of helping empower the mind to pursue truth and, in its own way, give honor and glory to God.”

In important respects, Catholic athletic programs look different than those at their secular counterparts. Student-athletes at a faithful Catholic school or college learn to understand the unity of body and spirit and how they can give praise to God through play, exertion and teamwork.

Sport should help young people grow in virtue, by teaching students to strive for excellence while preparing for competition and competing. “The goal of sports is, through healthy competition, to build up both oneself and others through growth in mind, strength, skill and virtue,” the standards state.

In these ways, Catholic education is an important and necessary leader in the world of sport. “With the fundamental concept of the human person so grievously under attack in the common culture, Catholic educational institutions cannot remain passive or silent, but must give witness to the truth of the human person.”

Striving to get sports right

Ave Maria University in Ave Maria, Fla., actively recruits students who are interested in faithful Catholic education and a sports program that is especially suited to Christian formation. Coaches help players focus on the fundamentals, both in sport and in life.

“One of our mottos for the season is ‘faith over fear,’” says Ave Maria Women’s Basketball Coach Alex Moorehead in a video shared on social media. “No matter what, our faith is going to be constant and consistent... Our focus for today was Jeremiah 29:11—no matter what the outcome is, we have eternal faith. And that’s what we’re trying to do here as the season goes along... We expect to be competitive; we know our conference is tough, but we think we can be one of the best teams in the conference if we put our minds to it.”

The University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D., focuses on the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, along with magnanimity and humility, in its athletics program.

“Additionally, we recognize that the signs of these virtues—and thus the signs of

greatness that will demonstrate our progress—will be solidarity and harmony. These reveal an integrated individual and communal living,” the University explains.

At the K-12 level, Chesterton Academy of the Holy Family in Lisle, Illinois, knows there are great benefits to a Catholic sports program. “You work together as a team, you learn how to achieve goals, you learn how to lose and win gracefully. Our students who participate in sports become more acclimated to the community faster and easier,” says Brenie Bowles, one of the school’s co-founders.

Almost everyone in the school plays a sport, Bowles notes. Out of the 69 girls at the school, at least 80 percent of them participate in one sport or another, including volleyball, golf and soccer.

At the Academy, student-athletes strive to leave everything on the field and then end games singing the “Non Nobis Domine,” which was the chant of the Knights Templar. Moreover, Bowles explains, “The virtue building is where the rubber meets the road, and that’s just a result of virtue. Saints don’t become saints overnight; it’s a lifetime of sacrifice and saying yes to the Lord, building up virtue, and eventually, one can become a saint.”

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“SPORT IS PARTICULARLY VALUABLE FOR FORMING THE WHOLE PERSON.”

DAN GUERNSEY, ED.D.,
is education policy editor and
senior fellow of The Cardinal
Newman Society.



CHESTERTON ACADEMY OF THE HOLY FAMILY

10 Ways to Strengthen Athletics in Catholic Education

- 1 Develop and display an athletics mission statement which affirms that athletics complement and extend your institution's faith-based mission.
- 2 Prioritize academic and religious programs over athletics in resource and marketing initiatives. The institution's primary public identity and pride should be situated in its academic and religious identity.
- 3 Hold athletes to the same standards of academic performance, morality and decorum as other students, to avoid two categories of students.
- 4 Create opportunities for all students to participate in sports at various levels (intramural, pick-up and informal) to benefit from their formative value.
- 5 Establish professional development programs and policies for athletics personnel to develop the spiritual, emotional, social and moral dimensions of student-athletes. Teach a spirituality of athletics with presentations by theologians on Christian anthropology, the role of sport in human wellbeing and sports as a tool of evangelization and virtue development.
- 6 Adopt high standards for hiring and evaluating coaches who are role models for Christian virtue and maturity and who avoid humiliation, degradation or disrespect of student-athletes.
- 7 Make public prayer part of each home pre-game program and encourage post-game team prayers. Designate a program or team chaplain to schedule and lead team Masses, retreats and service projects.
- 8 Keep Sundays free to allow for proper celebration of the Lord's Day. If Sunday is a day of travel, make sure students can attend Mass.
- 9 Maintain the athletics program's mission and ensure student safety, fair play and justice, by determining participation on sex-specific teams by a student's biological sex, not gender expression or self-proclaimed gender identity. Consider invoking opt-out provisions when offered by a league or athletic association that permits transgendered athletes or otherwise compromises the integrity of athletics and risks scandal to students.
- 10 Keep in mind that the goal of athletics in a Catholic worldview is about the harmonious and integrated formation of student-athletes in mind, body and soul... and have fun in the process!

This list is drawn from The Cardinal Newman Society's new "Policy Standards on Formation of the Human Person in Catholic School and College Sports," which is available online.



MOUNT ROYAL ACADEMY IN SUNAPEE, N.H.

Possible Questions

Question: Could we just let sport be sport, run a competitive program like our peers, and leave the rest to theology class or Sunday school?

Response: Catholic schools and colleges are educational evangelical communities of faith. Sports in our communities are a part of something much bigger than simply competition and athletic glory. Because Catholic education is different, with a more comprehensive integrated approach to student formation, our sports programs are different. They are orientated to integral formation of mind, body and spirit within a Catholic understanding of the human person.

Question: Isn't it a violation of good taste and religious freedom to offer a specifically Christian or Catholic prayer before a game? Is that proselytizing? Shouldn't we choose the most generic and universal sentiments to avoid offending others?

Response: In athletic events, the home team is responsible for the pre-game program. When we invite guests into our "home," it is a Catholic home. We have a chance to show our guests who we are: a community of faith and part of the Catholic Church, and in this instance the Church at play and prayer. While we respect our guests and should never choose a Catholic prayer that might lead to confusion, we also respect them enough to assume they are capable of the virtue of tolerance and respect incumbent upon guests in another person's home or Church. We should never shy away from the name of Jesus in any prayer or circumstance out of a false sense of inclusivity or a fear of appearing pious. See John 14:13-14: "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in my name, I will do it." Also see Matthew 10:33: "But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."

Question: Don't laws and athletic associations require a school or college to provide students access to the team of their choice according to their declared sexual identity?

Response: Local, state and federal laws in the United States and athletic association policies are changing rapidly on this subject, and there is no national consensus. A Catholic school or college must carefully review applicable laws and affiliations.



Regardless, there is no option for a faithfully Catholic institution to deny or cast doubt upon the God-given biological sex of any person, including students and employees. This would violate the mission of Catholic education to teach and witness to truth. Faced with a legal challenge, a Catholic institution's best defense may be to assert religious freedom by claiming exemption from the law, seeking relief under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or appealing to the First Amendment or provisions in a state constitution. A school or college has the strongest claim to religious freedom protections if its policies and actions are directly explained by Catholic teachings, consistently faithful and consistently applied over time and across situations.

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A Coach's Program for Integral Formation

by Newman Society Staff

The Cardinal Newman Society recently sat down with Mike Salomon, head men's and women's tennis coach at faithful Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, N.C., to discuss sports and faith. Salomon has led his team to great success over the past eight years, including two regular-season Conference Carolinas titles. While a student at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Md.,



Salomon achieved the all-time singles win record, which he still holds, and received the "Sheridan Award" for athletic and academic achievement. He is married to Kelly Salomon, also a college tennis champion and now a program director at The Cardinal Newman Society.

Can you tell us a bit about your background in athletics?

Sport has played a significant role in my

life. My mother was a professional athlete, and two of my brothers, my wife, and I all competed in tennis at the Division I level in college. Now as a coach, I have the opportunity to share the benefits of sports with the players on my teams.

With competition, players can learn about hard work, discipline, and so many virtues to achieve success. But the overall purpose of sport—which is embraced by the best coaches—is about being formed into the person God is calling us to be. This truth has made a great impact on my life.

How did sport influence your conversion to the Catholic faith?

I was raised in a strong Christian family and attended a Catholic school recognized on the Newman Society's Honor

Roll for grades 7-12. I was one of only a few non-Catholics in the school, and the teachers, my peers, the chaplain and the culture made a huge impact on my life. However, I'd credit my coaches with making the greatest impact.

The coaches at my Catholic school demanded excellence and cared deeply about "competing to win" as something of value to dedicate every ounce of one's body, mind and spirit to in that moment. Once they were able to help me understand how important it was to give everything you have in this arena, it wasn't much of a stretch to introduce the concept of giving everything you have toward developing your faith and striving to be the person God is calling you to be. While I often fall short, the idea of pursuing holiness really appealed to me as the ultimate version of "competitive excellence"—how you can do the best you are able with what God has given you both in sports and in life.

What led you to coaching at Belmont Abbey College?

Dr. Bill Thierfelder, president of the College and a former Olympian, has set the college on a mission of "excellence and virtue," and he's dedicated to hiring faculty and staff who are also in pursuit of this mission.

It's exciting to part of a place that's helping student athletes strive to be their best and compete for championships, while orienting that experience toward the ultimate purpose, which is to be formed into the best version of oneself in body, mind and spirit.

“THE COACHES
AT MY
CATHOLIC
SCHOOL
DEMANDED
EXCELLENCE.”





What do you see as the difference between the “point” and “purpose” of sport?

The point of competitive sport is the immediate objective—competing to win and trying to be the best you are capable of with your skills and talents. This is notably different from a “recreational” concept of sport, which is less vocational and is much more oriented toward health and exercise. Health and exercise are ancillary benefits of competitive sport as well but are not its primary objective.

The overall purpose of sport is what we ultimately orient it towards. Often in today’s sports society, we see the purpose of sport being mistakenly directed toward “win at all costs,” “getting paid” and “fame.” Pope Pius XII has a famous quote about sport being “properly directed.” Making sure that the ultimate

purpose of sport is truly the formation and development of each person into whom God is calling them to be changes the calculus for competitive sport. This framework allows for the development of heroic virtue and can be a part of a person’s journey on the path to holiness.

How do you help form your student-athletes in mind, body and soul?

“TENNIS IS OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS AN INDIVIDUAL-FOCUSED SPORT. IN OUR PROGRAM, WE ARE TRYING TO CHANGE THAT MINDSET...”

First, we commit to the idea that excellence is important—the way in which we compete, practice and develop our skills and talents matters. If we do these things in a virtuous way, we are providing our players with a tangible exercise in the pursuit of competitive greatness.

Secondly, we then strive to connect competitive excellence with the bigger picture. We want the student-athletes

to grasp that the struggle to improve, win and develop team camaraderie isn’t ultimately about whether we are holding the trophy at the end of the season, but about who we become through that process of giving all that we have toward the immediate goal. To connect competitive excellence with the bigger picture, we host weekly team meetings that explore these connections, focusing on what individual players and our team is currently experiencing.

Tennis is often thought of as an individual-focused sport. In our program, we are trying to change that mindset by building an authentic community experience into the structure of our team. While a typical college tennis team is small in size and only plays the top few players, our team is one of the largest in the country, and every person on the roster has opportunities to play competitive matches throughout the year. Even though the playing opportunities aren’t the same for each player, our program gives each person the chance to compete, improve and learn how to be a selfless teammate.

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Catholic Educators Rise to Defend Women's Sports

by Patrick Reilly

In December 2021, the witness of faithful Catholic educators helped persuade the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to include broad protection for the mission of religious colleges in the Association's new constitution.

Although the NCAA also took new steps to embrace gender ideology, the accommodation to religious colleges was a surprising concession showing the great importance of Catholics standing firm against gender ideology and in defense of women's sports.

Awareness is growing in American society about the errors of gender ideology, originally embraced out of compassion for a very few people who are born with ambiguous sexuality. Now the false ideology threatens to erase gains made in recent decades for women's athletics and protection from sexual assault. Men declaring themselves female and choosing to compete in women's sports or use women's private facilities is corrupting sports at all academic and professional levels, from high school swimming to Olympic events.

Faithful Catholic education respects not only the biological sex of students but also Catholic teaching which affirms God's creation of humans as male and female. Catholic schools and colleges, then, must firmly resist demands that they admit biological men to women's sports and should set an important example as faithful witnesses to the truth.

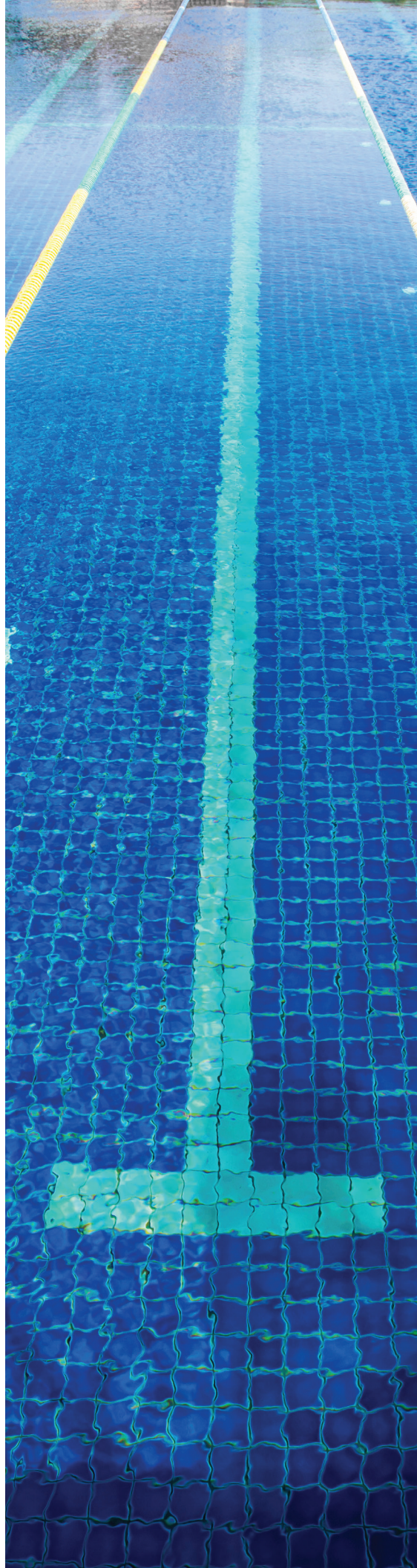
Catholics challenge the NCAA

In December, I went public at the National Catholic Register with concerns raised by leaders of several faithful Catholic colleges that we recommend in our Newman Guide, and which participate in Division II or III of the NCAA. The presidents of Belmont Abbey College, Catholic University of America, University of Dallas, University of Mary, University of St. Thomas (Tex.) and Walsh University had been fighting proposed changes to the NCAA constitution that seemed intended to push out religious colleges with traditional views of sexuality and gender.

By adding deliberately pointed language to its constitution—that colleges must “comply with federal and state laws and local ordinances, including respect to gender equity, diversity and inclusion”—the NCAA appeared to be stacking the deck against religious colleges. The language seemed designed to ban Catholic colleges from membership in the NCAA, if at any point they go to court to assert exemption from state and federal laws and to defend their mission.

This amendment to the NCAA constitution was the result of lobbying by activists including the anti-Catholic Human Rights Campaign. It would have set up a legal showdown between the NCAA and faithful Catholic colleges that refuse to accept biological males on women's teams.

“The Catholic attempt to use sport toward the integral formation of the hu-



man person and to give praise and honor to the Creator is subverted by competing ideologies in the common culture, especially gender ideology,” warns The Cardinal Newman Society in our new standards for sports at Catholic schools and colleges. “The issue is bigger than just sexual politics; Catholic educators must resist gender theories that aim to annihilate the concept of nature and our understanding of who we are and how we exist in the world.”

Thankfully, the faithful Newman Guide colleges joined many other religious colleges in urging the NCAA to add another provision to its constitution, ensuring their rights to uphold their religious missions. The Cardinal Newman Society made the issue public and endorsed the new language, “Consistent with the principle of institutional control, no provision in this Constitution should be construed to restrict or limit colleges and universities, public or private, from adopting or maintaining missions and policies consistent with their legal rights or obligations as institutions of high learning.”

My column in the National Catholic Register was widely distributed on social media, and it was cited by Catholic and other Christian media. A few days later, the NCAA added new language to its constitution recognizing the mission priorities of religious colleges. Apparently, the NCAA governors decided losing Catholic and Christian colleges as members would harm the association and would be patently unfair to student-athletes.

Faithful Catholic education is worth fighting for, and it was the smaller but most faithful colleges that helped achieve this valuable protection, even while large institutions like Georgetown University instead advocated the “woke” agenda of gender ideology.



Tough road ahead

The added language to the NCAA constitution does not mean religious colleges will not face difficulties in the future. The association has signaled acceptance of gender ideology, allowing each sport’s national governing body to determine its own approach to competition by students who claim an opposite gender, subject to review by an NCAA committee. It remains to be seen whether the NCAA will honor its statement of respect for religious education.

In college sports generally, the challenge of gender ideology faces women in multiple sports. University of Pennsylvania swimmer Lia Thomas, a biological male who is undergoing hormone therapy, has made headlines by setting pool records

in the Ivy league swimming championship.

The problems are also reaching into high school athletics. The fastest female runner in Connecticut high schools was forced to file a lawsuit in 2020, together

with other student-athletes, because of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference’s decision to allow biological males to race against girls. The lawsuit was deemed moot by a federal court last year, since the girls had graduated, and it was dismissed—but the girls have appealed the ruling.

Often Catholic schools and colleges belong to such athletic associations, and these are likely to continue presenting challenges for Catholic educators. Whether on gender identity, prayer before games or other concerns of Catholic institutions, secular society is increasingly unwilling to respect the needs of Catholic education. But compromising on fundamental truths of human nature and a school or college’s mission is not an option.

On the other hand, witnessing to the truth is itself a valuable education for students—not only when we win, but also when we lose. Ultimately, we can trust in the Holy Spirit to protect the Church and open new doors to Catholic formation if we only stay faithful. **OCM**

“**GENDER IDEOLOGY
THREATENS TO ERASE
GAINS MADE FOR
WOMEN’S ATHLETICS
AND PROTECTION FROM
SEXUAL ASSAULT.**”

PATRICK REILLY
is president and founder of
The Cardinal Newman Society.





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NEWMAN SOCIETY**
Promoting and Defending Faithful Catholic Education

RESOURCES ON SPORTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

ACCESS HERE:
NewmanSoc.org/Sport

The Cardinal Newman Society's new **"Policy Standards on Formation of the Human Person in Catholic School and College Sports"** document, which includes:

- "principles" and "standards" to guide sports in Catholic schools;
- suggestions to implement the standards;
- examples of school policies on athletic mission and philosophy, code of conduct, gender, sportsmanship and more;
- selections from Church documents informing sports and faith; and
- selected resources for staff training on sports.

10 Ways to Strengthen Athletics in Catholic Education



Dr. Dan Guernsey



Dr. Denise Donohue

On-demand webinars, including:

- Webinar with Dr. Dan Guernsey, education policy editor and senior fellow, and Dr. Denise Donohue, vice president for educator resources, on 10 Ways to Strengthen Athletics in Catholic Education;
- Webinar with Dr. Bill Thierfelder, president of Belmont Abbey College, on sport and virtue.

