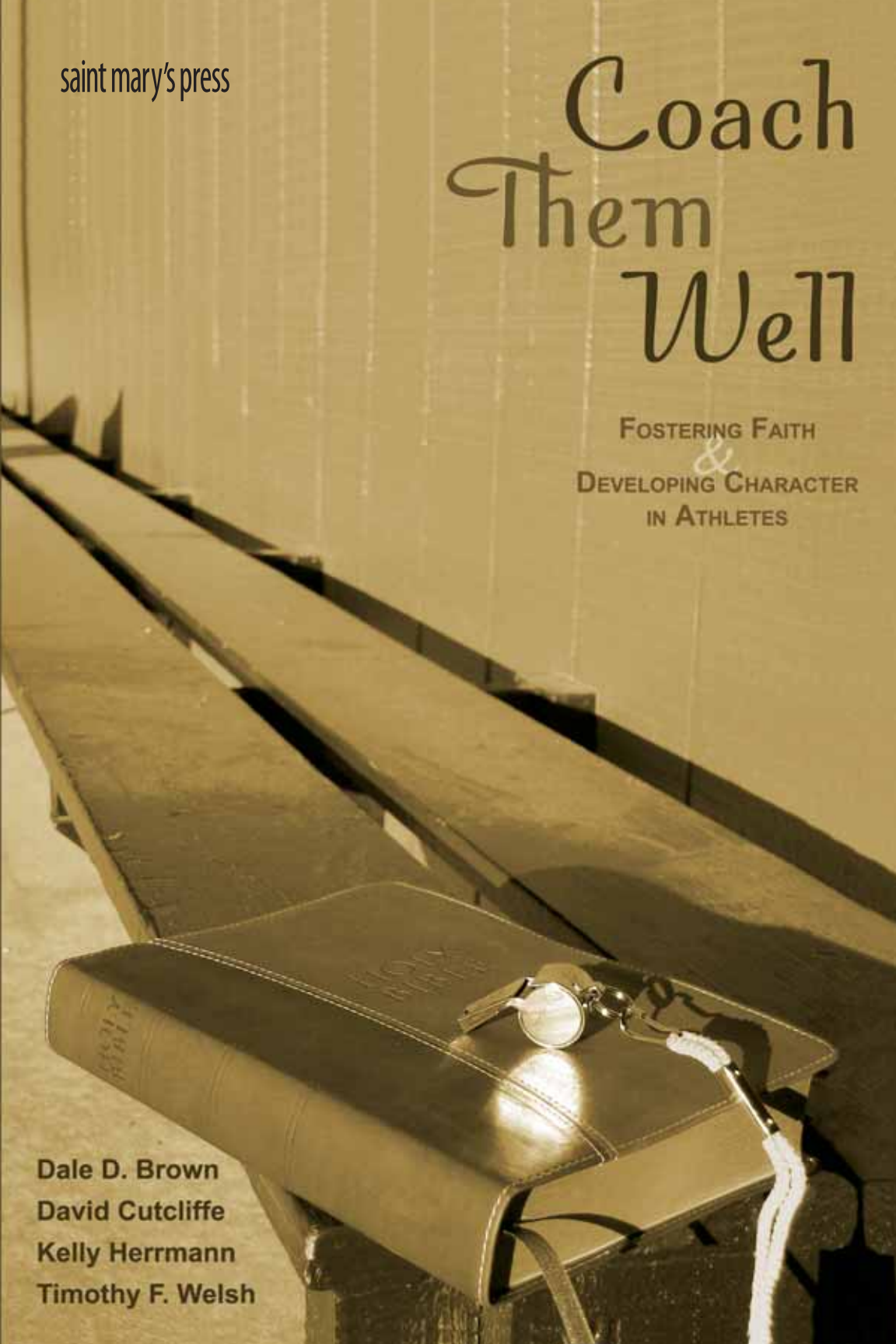


saint mary's press

# Coach Them Well

FOSTERING FAITH  
&  
DEVELOPING CHARACTER  
IN ATHLETES

Dale D. Brown  
David Cutcliffe  
Kelly Herrmann  
Timothy F. Welsh



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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **The Increasing Role of Sports in the Lives of Youth**

A recent survey by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) discovered that more than 70 percent—almost three out of every four—of Catholic high school students are involved in either interscholastic or intramural sports. This means that almost the same number of youth are in contact with someone they call “coach.” More often than not, that coach is an adult who has decided to work with young people in the arena of athletics. Coaches range from the volunteers who spend a few hours a week coaching junior league football to the head coaches or athletic directors at large high schools and at universities. The purpose of *Coach Them Well: Fostering Faith and Developing Character in Athletes* is to acknowledge the role that coaches play in the physical and moral development of young people. Through this resource, we want to extend a partnering hand to all coaches as they help form the faith and character of the athletes under their care. We want to do this by helping coaches understand themselves as people of faith and character.

## **What’s Inside?**

No coach is perfect, and that goes for the authors of *Coach Them Well*. These coaches do bring to the table a love of young people, a passion for the sports they coach, a deep faith nurtured by the Catholic Church, and a belief that athletics and faith do not compete with or contradict each other. In fact, the authors believe that athletics can be the gateway to spiritual development and emotional maturity. The coach can be the guide on that journey.



In this book you will find four college coaches' reflections on the ministry of coaching. The reflections contain the coaches' faith stories, as well as the insight gained through more than one hundred years of combined coaching experience. The coaches also share compelling stories about the students they have coached. The four coaches represent the diversity of coaching itself. From the reflections of an NCAA Division I football coach to the thoughts of a Catholic university women's basketball coach, from the reflections of an NCAA Final Four basketball coach about the hurdles athletes must clear to the thoughts of the Notre Dame University men's swimming coach on the importance of mentoring—*Coach Them Well* presents a wealth of knowledge from the experiences of coaches who have mentored, led, coached, and competed at all levels.

## Making the Common Uncommon

A. Bartlett “Bart” Giamatti, the former president of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, and current Major League Baseball commissioner, sees sports as an entry point into something larger in the lives of its participants.

Sport is an instrument for vision, and it ever seeks to make the common—what we all see, if we look—uncommon. Not forever, not impossibly perfect, but uncommon enough to remain a bright spot in the memory, thus creating a reservoir of transformation to which we can return when we are free to do so. (*Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games*, p. 15)

Coaches have the opportunity to make the common uncommon and to transform the lives of young people for the better. As you read these reflections, may you be renewed in your ministry of coaching and inspired to shepherd closer to God the youth in your care.



**KELLY HERRMANN**

Kelly Herrmann is currently the coordinator of intramural athletics, as well as the women's volleyball and basketball coach, for Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. From 1988 to 1991, Kelly served as the athletic director for Franciscan University. In 1987, Kelly earned her BS degree in education from the university. Kelly has coached at all educational levels, from junior high through college and university. While attending college, she helped coach a local high school team.

Kelly and her husband, John, who is the director of student financial services at Franciscan University, are strongly committed to campus life and the faith formation of the youth they serve. In addition to her coaching and intramural coordinator responsibilities, Kelly serves as an adviser to one of the campus households – small faith communities whose same-gender members meet for support, bonding, and faith formation. Kelly and John strive to help students live healthful, balanced, faith-filled lives.

Kelly and John have six children – Johnny, Peter, Leo, Emily, Kevin, and Michael – whom they home-school. Kelly's commitments as a wife, mother, teacher, coach, and mentor reflect her belief that God calls her and John to live their faith and share it in an evangelistic way with the students at Franciscan University.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Coach as Shaper of Faith Through Athletics**

**Kelly Herrmann**

### **The Uniqueness of Coaching in a Catholic School**

Occasionally, people ask me, “What makes coaching at a Catholic school different from coaching at any other school?” I have generally found the difference, to my great sadness, to be not much. Many coaches seem unable to base their coaching decisions on things that should matter, such as character, faith, integrity, example, and so on. All too often, they make decisions based on wins versus losses. As well as any coach, I understand the pressure to win that exists in the sports world. Regardless of where we coach, the old adage “It’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game” simply isn’t seen to be true anymore. At all levels of play, the message is to win – at any cost. Even at the youngest ages, the first question children often hear after a game is, Did you win? Yet, other questions demand important answers with long-lasting consequences, such as the following: Did you give 100 percent? Did you work well with your teammates? Did you take the coaches’ instructions well? But the pressure to win exists, no matter who you are and regardless of your league.

With a heightened focus on winning in the culture of sports, maybe those of us in Catholic schools should ask a different question: What should be different about coaching in a Catholic school? My experience coaching in public schools, recreational settings, Catholic schools, and now at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, is that I must live

as an example. I must live as though I seriously believe in Jesus Christ. Moreover, I can and should share this belief with my athletes.

## Living Your Belief in Jesus Christ

As I mentioned, my first task as a faith-filled coach is to set an example for my athletes, the referees, the spectators, and the peer coaches. The effect coaches can have on their players cannot be overstated. Working together, sweating together, and being committed to common goals as a team powerfully and profoundly bind a team to its coach. In many instances, these bonds can last a lifetime. I have noticed that the greater the sacrifice and commitment, the greater the benefit for all the people on the team—players and coaches.

The coach's job is to teach the X's and O's. The coach can also teach so much more. The players learn from the coach's manner and attitude. If the coach expects the players to be hard workers, the coach must be a hard worker. If the players are to be selfless, the coach must be selfless. In a Catholic school, living and exemplifying a Catholic lifestyle are just as important for the coach as for the players. Coaches can talk about being the best we can be, striving for excellence, reaching our goals, and sacrifice. Yet what better reason is there to take up the task than this: Christ calls us to!

Christ doesn't call us coaches to mediocrity. He calls us to do our best in everything we do. From game planning to managing practice, from administrative tasks to relating with assistants, we act differently from other people because of Christ's call. A Catholic coach living his or her faith, showing the way to players during, and away from, competition, can bring players into a far deeper spiritual experience. A coach who is an expert at the game but who only barks out "Work hard" and "Be committed because I said so" is missing an opportunity to show the way.

As a wife, a mother of six, a coordinator of intramural athletics, and a women's basketball and volleyball coach, I try hard to live my Catholic faith in everything I do. Living as a disciple of Christ is a daunting task at which I daily fall short. But I'm still in the race. I rely on my faith, the sacraments, and my church community for support and guidance. Instead of keeping such support private, I try to model it