

# SPORT PSYCHOLOGY FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Edited by Camilla J. Knight, Chris G. Harwood  
and Daniel Gould



# SPORT PSYCHOLOGY FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Understanding and applying psychology within youth sport settings is key to maximising young athletes' enjoyment, wellbeing, and sporting performance. Written by a team of leading international researcher-practitioners, this book is the first to offer an evidence-based introduction to the theory and practice of sport psychology for children and young athletes. It provides practical strategies and guidance for those working in or researching youth sport, demonstrating how to integrate sport psychology effectively in a variety of youth sport contexts.

With real-life case studies that demonstrate psychological theory put into practice, it discusses a wide spectrum of issues faced by young athletes and recommends the best approaches to addressing them. Key topics covered include:

- the cognitive, social, and physical development of young athletes
- optimising fun, motivation, and self-confidence
- enhancing young athletes' relationships with coaches, parents, and peers
- managing stress, injuries, and transitions
- effectively developing talent and long-term engagement in sport
- encouraging organisational culture change.

The most up-to-date and authoritative guide to sport psychology for young people, this is essential reading for anyone working in youth sport.

**Camilla J. Knight** is Associate Professor of Sport Science at Swansea University, UK.

**Chris G. Harwood** is Professor of Sport Psychology at Loughborough University, UK.

**Daniel Gould** is Director of the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports and Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at Michigan State University, USA.

# SPORT PSYCHOLOGY FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

*Edited by Camilla J. Knight, Chris G. Harwood,  
and Daniel Gould*

First published 2018  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2018 selection and editorial matter, Camilla J. Knight, Chris G. Harwood,  
and Daniel Gould; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Camilla J. Knight, Chris G. Harwood and Daniel Gould to be identified  
as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters,  
has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and  
Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised  
in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or  
hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information  
storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks,  
and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Knight, Camilla J., editor. | Harwood, Chris G., editor. |  
Gould, Daniel, editor.

Title: Sport Psychology for Young Athletes / Edited by Camilla J. Knight,  
Chris G. Harwood and Daniel Gould.

Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2018. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017020992 | ISBN 9781138682382 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781138682399 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781315545202 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Sports for children—Psychological aspects. |

Child athletes—Training of. | Child athletes—Psychology.

Classification: LCC GV709.2 .S69 2018 | DDC 796.083—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017020992>

ISBN: 978-1-138-68238-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-68239-9 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-54520-2 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo

by Out of House Publishing

# 7

## INTEGRATING FUN IN YOUNG ATHLETES' SPORT EXPERIENCES

*Amanda J. Visek, Heather Mannix, Devon Mann, and Ciera Jones*

A mass of research literature clearly establishes early positive sport experiences as the foundation to ensure continued sport participation, whereas negative and uninspiring experiences push children to drop out (e.g. Bailey, Hillman, Arent, & Petitpas, 2013). Over the years, many factors have been the focus of children's participation retention and attrition. The Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993), however, was the first to identify sport enjoyment, among other factors including involvement opportunities, personal investments, social constraints, and involvement alternatives as determinants of whether children choose to continue playing sport or drop out. Of the five determinants, sport enjoyment was and continues to be the strongest predictor of sport commitment (Chairat, Naruepon, Li, & Harmer, 2009; Iñigo, Podlog, & Hall, 2015; Scanlan et al., 1993). This means that if young athletes enjoy playing, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (see Chapters 6 and 8) to continue their involvement in sport.

Interestingly, 'enjoyment' has been the dominant term in the sport science literature used to describe children's positive experiences. However, children more commonly use the colloquial word 'fun' when recounting and describing their experiences (Bengoechea, Streaan, & Williams, 2004). For instance, when children are asked why they continue playing, fun is the number one cited reason (Eitzen & Sage, 2009; Petlichkoff, 1992; Scanlan et al., 1993). Alternatively, when asked why they dropped out, it is because it was not fun anymore. Scanlan and Simons (1992) maintain that enjoyment is a broader and more inclusive term that encompasses fun. Still, according to dictionaries, fun is synonymous with enjoyment and both terms are used interchangeably. Therefore, more contemporary scientific efforts have focused on incorporating the child's voice and thus use the word fun.

The need for evidence-based applications of fun at every level of children's athletics has never been greater than now. For example, according to Sports and Fitness

Industry Association (2013) data (as cited by Aspen Institute Sports & Society, 2015), there is a significant decline among 6–12 year olds' overall sport participation and attrition from team sports is higher than ever. For these reasons, the purpose of this chapter is to bridge established theoretical frameworks and science with recommended applied practices for promoting the most fun possible within sport. First, we provide the scientific basis for what fun is in youth sports today. Second, using a global sport framework we illustrate how immediate fun experiences, amassed over time, are essential to children's sport performance, personal development, and enduring sport participation. Third, we offer practical suggestions for purposefully incorporating fun that are appropriate for every level of youth sport.

## **Towards an understanding of fun**

Fun is largely considered a self-described, emotively driven experience. We know when we are having fun and we certainly know when we are not. But, what makes sport participation fun for children? A recent study engaged hundreds of young athletes, parents, and coaches to identify the relative importance of all things that make playing sports fun for children ages 8–19 years. This resulted in what are known as the FUN MAPS, a series of 360-degree data-driven blueprints, conceptualised entirely by youth sport stakeholders. The FUN MAPS are the basis of the fun integration theory (Visek et al., 2015a).

### ***Fun integration theory***

According to the fun integration theory (Visek et al., 2015a; 2017), fun is the accumulation of immediate experiences derived from contextual, internal, social, and external sources of fun-determinants. Fun-determinants are specific, actionable behaviours for fostering fun, of which the fun integration theory identifies 81, organised within 11 interrelated fun-factors (see Table 7.1).

Contextually, within physical activity settings, there are specific determinants of *Games* and *Practices* that contribute to children's fun. Examples of the fun-determinants within these two fun-factors include, but are not limited to, *getting playing time* and *well-organised practices*. Internal sources of fun, however, are derived from *Trying Hard*, *Learning and Improving*, and *Mental Bonuses*, which are fostered from determinants such as *trying your best*, *being challenged to improve*, and *keeping a positive attitude*. Socially, fun is derived from *Positive Team Dynamics*, *Team Friendships*, and *Team Rituals* that include fun-determinants such as *supporting and getting along with teammates* and *high-fiving*. External sources of fun include *Positive Coaching*, *Game Time Support*, and *Swag*. *Positive Coaching* includes, but is not limited to, *being a positive role model* that gives *clear, consistent communication*. *Encouraging behaviour* by parents and spectators, along with *consistent calls by referees* are some of the fun-determinants of *Game Time Support*. More superfluous things, such as *sports equipment*, are an example of *Swag*.

The fun-determinants encapsulate major concepts and specific constructs of well-established models and theories used to understand children's participation motives,

**TABLE 7.1** Fun-determinants

---

*One thing that makes playing sports fun for players is...*

---

**Trying Hard**

- Trying your best
- Working hard
- Exercising and being active
- Getting/staying in shape
- Playing well during a game
- Being strong and confident
- Competing
- Making a good play (scoring, big save, etc.)
- Setting and achieving goals
- Playing hard

**Positive Team Dynamics**

- Playing well together as a team
- Supporting my teammates
- When players show good sportspersonship
- Being supported by my teammates
- Getting help from teammates
- Warming up and stretching as a team

**Learning and Improving**

- Being challenged to improve/get better
- Learning from mistakes
- Improving athletic skills to play at the next level
- Ball touches (dribbling, passing, shooting, etc.)
- Learning new skills
- Using a skill learned in practice during a game
- Playing different positions
- Going to sports camp
- Copying moves and tricks of pro athletes

**Games**

- Getting playing time
- Playing your favourite position
- Playing against an evenly matched team
- Being known by others for your sport skills
- Playing on a nice field
- Playing in tournaments

**Mental Bonuses**

- Keeping a positive attitude
- Winning
- It relieves stress
- Ignoring the score

**Game Time Support**

- A ref who makes consistent calls
- Parents showing good sportspersonship (encouraging)
- Being congratulated for playing well
- Having people cheer at the game
- Having your parent(s) watch your games
- Getting complimented by other parents

**Team Rituals**

- Showing team spirit with gear, ribbons, signs, etc.
- High-fiving, fist-bumping, hugging
- End-of-season/team parties

### **Positive Coaching**

- When a coach treats players with respect
- A coach who knows a lot about the sport
- Having a coach who is a positive role model
- When a coach encourages the team
- Clear, consistent communication from coach
- A coach who listens and considers players' opinions
- A coach who allows mistakes, while staying positive
- A coach who you can talk to easily
- A nice, friendly coach
- Getting compliments from coaches
- When a coach participates during practice
- When a coach jokes around

### **Practice**

- Having well-organised practices
- Taking water breaks during practice
- Having the freedom to play creatively
- Doing lots of different drills/activities in practice
- Scrimmaging during practice
- Partner and small group drills
- Practicing with specialty trainers/coaches

### **Team Friendships**

- Getting along with your teammates
- Being around your friends
- Having a group of friends outside of school
- Hanging with teammates outside practice, games
- Being part of the same team year after year
- Meeting new people
- Talking and goofing off with teammates

- Going out to eat as a team
- Doing team rituals
- Carpooling with teammates to practices/games
- Doing a cool team cheer

### **Swag**

- Having nice sports gear and equipment
- Earning medals or trophies
- Travelling to new places to play
- Wearing a special, cool uniform
- Eating snacks/treats after the game
- Staying in hotels for games/tournaments
- Getting pictures taken

---

Note: The 11 fun-factors (bolded) and the 81 fun-determinants (bulleted) beneath each fun-factor are listed in order of importance from highest to lowest.  
Source: Adapted from Visek et al., 2015b.

predict their sport behaviour, and cultivate positive, healthy sport experiences (Visek et al., 2015). For example, 24 of the 81 fun-determinants relate to achievement goal theory (e.g. Nicholls, 1989; see Chapter 8) and 32 fun-determinants link with competence motivation theory (e.g. Harter, 1978; see Chapter 9). Likewise, as many as 68 of the 81 fun-determinants promote autonomy, competence, and social relatedness, which underpin the self-determination theory of motivation (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1985; see Chapter 6). To provide for children's fun needs, the determinants can be applied to practice and game plans, set standards for sideline behaviour, inform coach education, as well as establish league policies (Visek et al., 2015a).

### ***Debunking myths about fun***

The fun integration theory categorically discredits commonly held ideas about fun that warrant addressing. For example, having fun is frequently thought of loosely as simply laughing about and goofing around, and thus often seen as incompatible with high-level sport. However, the notion that fun is just a casual good time minimises the significance it plays in the experiences of young athletes. In fact, data from US Olympic athletes underscores the significance of fun in sustaining young athletes' early sport participation and also sporting excellence. Specifically, when asked to rate the importance of 12 potential motives for their early sport participation, fun was ranked fourth by Olympians from the 2000–2012 Games and second among those from the 1984–1998 Games (Snyder, 2014). When asked to rate the level of influence these same factors had on their motivation to pursue excellence in their sport, fun again ranked near the top. For these Olympians, fun sport experiences early in their young athletic careers significantly influenced their desire to play and solidified their commitment to strive for distinction at sport's highest level. Thus, fun is clearly not a mutually exclusive experience apart from athletic development.

Remarkably, when we conduct educational workshops teaching parents and coaches ways to integrate fun into sport, they grasp the multivariable nature of fun when presented with the fun integration theory and the FUN MAPS. However, as soon as the FUN MAPS (see Visek et al., 2015a) and the associated inventory of fun-factors and determinants (Table 7.1; Visek et al., 2015b) are no longer displayed in front of them, both parents and coaches often revert to their original, default concept of fun as a one-dimensional, vaguely defined emotive experience. Consequently, transforming adults' schema for fun is an unusually challenging process requiring thoughtful and intentional effort at many different levels within organised sport.

One way that has helped us to do this is to associate strong action verbs and nouns of the fun-determinants with the word 'fun' in very explicit ways. For instance, fun is synonymous with *learning, effort, knowledge, improving*, and so on. Statements like 'Our players value knowledgeable coaches that help them have fun by learning and improving' underscore the value of knowledgeable coaching when engaging volunteer coaches to attend coaching education. Similarly, reminding teammates that the game is more fun when they do things *together* by *helping each other* is an informative and encouraging way to use positive team dynamics to

promote fun for young athletes among one another. Interestingly, it is common for organisations to purport that they provide sport programmes that are fun, or maintain that fun is the foundation on which their programmes are built. However, no systematic approach is used to ensure that children are having fun. In these cases, we recommend that youth sport organisations shape the overall sport culture by using the fun integration theory to establish and reinforce positive sport norms and create developmentally appropriate programmes for young athletes.

To more fully integrate fun within a sport culture, it is important to address long-held perceptions of fun. For example, fun is commonly believed to be a function of gender, in which social determinants of fun are thought to be of upmost importance to girls, whereas for boys task- and mastery-focused determinants are considered more important. What young athletes consider fun is also thought to change over time, implying their fun needs are a function of age and maturation. Additionally, recreational programmes are often touted as where children go to ‘have fun’ and competitive, select ‘elite’ programmes are where they go to improve, perhaps even at the expense of having fun. However, a recent study (Visek et al., 2015b; 2017) assessing group differences among young athletes found that, regardless of a young athlete’s age (younger vs. older), gender (girls vs. boys), or sports programme (recreational vs. travel), *Trying Hard*, *Positive Team Dynamics*, and *Positive Coaching* were reported as the fun-factors of chief importance (see Table 7.2 for a list of the 11 fun-factors that athletes collectively rank, from most to least important).

This is not to say that group differences do not exist or that fostering the fun-determinants requires the same approach for every team or individual athlete. Generally speaking, though, Visek and colleagues’ (2015b, 2017) findings illustrate that what one athlete considers the most fun is also the most fun for another. Future studies are needed to further assess group differences among young athletes related

**TABLE 7.2** Fun-factors ranked by importance

---

**Primary Importance**

1. Trying Hard
2. Positive Team Dynamics
3. Positive Coaching

**Secondary Importance**

4. Learning and Improving
5. Games
6. Practices
7. Team Friendships
8. Mental Bonuses
9. Game Time Support

**Tertiary Importance**

10. Team Rituals
  11. Swag
- 

Source: Visek et al., 2015b.

to their prioritisation of the fun-factors. However, based on the evidence to date, providing developmentally appropriate opportunities to promote the determinants of the fun-factors identified as of primary importance in Table 7.2 is likely the most efficient and constructive means to foster fun for any young athlete.

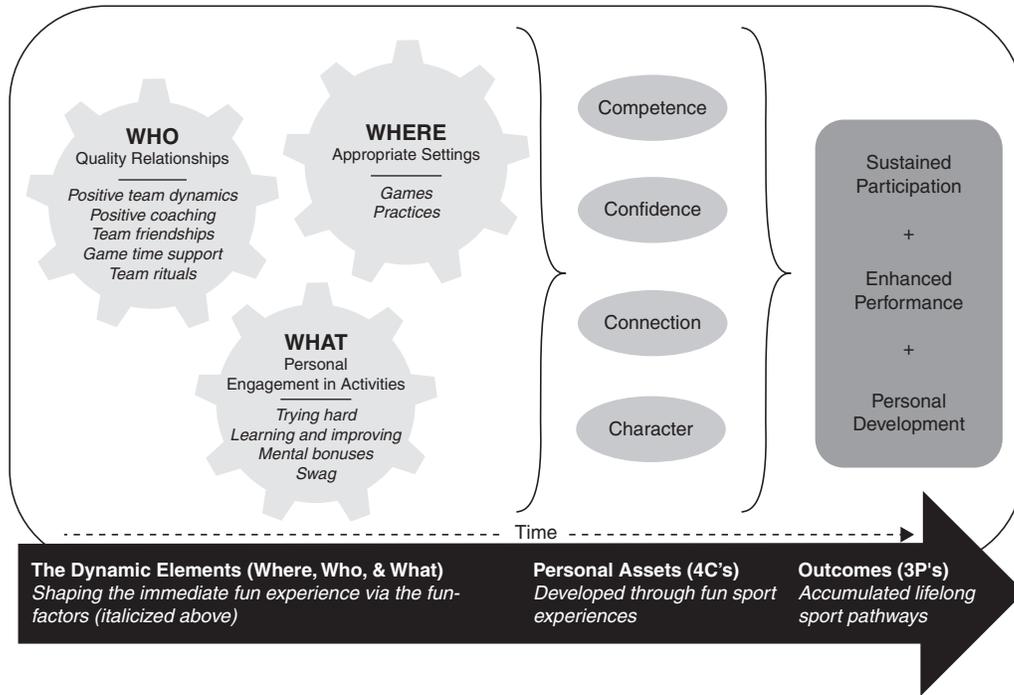
### ***Physical literacy the key to fun***

Successful sport programmes of any kind ensure two key components for children: (a) they are having fun, and (b) their physical activity programming is grounded in fundamental movement principles (e.g. agility, balance, coordination) fostering physical literacy (Garcia, Garcia, Floyd, & Lawson, 2002; see Chapter 6). At the core of physical literacy is the development of a child's movement vocabulary and physical movement competence, as well as the confidence and pleasure derived from participation (Cairney, Bedard, Dudley, & Kriellaars, 2016; see Chapter 6). Although physical competence and confidence are said to be the gateway to active participation, high-quality, immediate fun experiences act as the bridge to sustaining athletes' participation over time. Whether they choose an inclusive recreational sport route or a selective elite pathway (Visek et al., 2017), the cultivation of physical competencies and overall physical literacy are key to fun (e.g. see the fun-determinants of *Trying Hard, Learning and Improving*, and *Positive Coaching* in Table 7.1; Visek et al., 2015b).

In fact, physical competence and confidence, built on a fun and challenging pathway, equip children for failures and successes. For example, young athletes have identified fun-determinants such as *being challenged to improve at my sport* and *learning from mistakes* amongst others as highly important. However, to build children's confidence, determinants such as *a coach who allows mistakes while staying positive*, *being supported*, and *supporting my teammates* highlight the importance of creating a safe and encouraging environment. Therefore, providing children of all abilities with learning opportunities in an environment that is psychologically safe is critical to athletic development (see Chapter 22 for details). This type of sport culture promotes fun as a result of being challenged, while removing the fear of making mistakes. Providing opportunities to fully develop young athletes' competence, across a variety of movement skills, in a healthy, fun environment builds confidence and leads to an increased desire to continue playing.

### **A personal assets approach to fun**

Adapted from the positive youth development (PYD) literature, the Personal Assets Framework (PAF) of sport (Côté, Turnnidge, & Vierimaa, 2016) proposes a global approach for cultivating improved *performance*, sustained *participation*, and *personal development* (the 3P's). Known as the long-term developmental benefits of participation, the 3P's are contingent upon structuring programmes around the development of children's personal assets known as the 4C's: *competence*, *confidence*, *connection*, and *character* (see Chapter 12 for further information). In other words, when there is commitment to the promotion of a young athlete's physical competence and confidence, within a social setting that provides opportunities to develop close connections



**FIGURE 7.1** An integrative applied approach to the PAF for sport, towards the development of personal assets and positive outcomes via fun  
Source: Adapted from Côté et al., 2016.

between peers and adults, while also creating situations that build character, there are resulting improvements in the 3P's (Côté & Hancock, 2014). Therefore, the promotion of a young athlete's 4C's is dependent on consistent accumulation of independent, positive, fun exposures via practices, games, and team gatherings that provide opportunities to create *quality relationships*, during activities that are *personally engaging* within *appropriate settings* (i.e. the PAF's dynamic elements).

Figure 7.1 illustrates an adapted, temporal approach that utilises the fun integration theory as a 'how to' catalyst for integrating the PAF for sport's dynamic elements, thereby translating science into practice. Specifically, the fun integration theory complements the PAF for sport's global framework by using the fun-factors and associated determinants to identify the 'who', 'what', and 'where' required to create sport environments that foster personal engagement (e.g. *Trying Hard, Learning and Improving*), quality relationships (e.g. *Positive Team Dynamics, Positive Coaching*), and appropriate settings (e.g. *Practices, Games*). Subsequently, repeated exposure to fun enhances the development of a young athlete's 4C's, in turn positively influencing the 3P's (Côté et al., 2016).

### ***Fostering the dynamic elements of fun***

Fun can be cultivated in many different and creative ways, as evidenced by the robustness of the fun integration theory. In this section, we first briefly describe the significance of the dynamic elements towards fostering fun and conclude with

specific applied practices that can be used to establish fun youth sport norms for young athletes.

### *Personal engagement in activities*

During early sport participation (sampling years; ages 6–12) children are encouraged to participate in diverse physical activities rather than specialise in one activity (Côté et al., 2016; see Chapters 6 and 11). During this time, play is more impactful than deliberate practice, especially if practice comprises drills in which children spend considerable time waiting in line for their turn. Instead, by ‘thinking small’ we can involve young athletes simultaneously to make practice more personally engaging and fun for everyone. For example, *well-organised practices* that provide young athletes with learning opportunities through a variety of *partner and small group activities*, particularly those mimicking cooperative and competitive play, keep children active and get them a greater number of *touches on the ball*, a critical component of personal engagement in practice and play activities.

### *Quality relationships*

Quality relationships act as a significant driving force socially for fun (Visek et al., 2015). Coaches (Santi, Brunton, Pietrantonio, & Mellalieu, 2014; see Chapter 19), along with parents (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; see Chapter 10), siblings, peers (see Chapter 18), and friends are social influencers uniquely positioned to impact a child’s experience. As such, these individuals have an obligation to create positive experiences where they can (Bailey et al., 2013). This is achievable via fun-factors such as *Positive Coaching*, *Game Time Support*, *Positive Team Dynamics*, *Team Rituals*, and *Team Friendships*. When children trust, respect, and value the relationships fostered with their coaches, teammates, and parents, they can have fun while taking risks, being creative and innovative, and succeeding and failing, especially in psychologically safe settings that challenge them to improve, yet embrace their mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow.

### *Appropriate settings*

The fun integration theory identifies specific determinants of practice and game settings that facilitate fun (e.g. *well-organised practices*, *partner and small group drills*, *playing a well-matched team*). Of note, practice and games settings are ultimately the by-product of adult planning and preparation. Therefore, parents and coaches must focus efforts towards creating fun, child-centred, physical and social environments that foster quality relationships and promote personal engagement for every child.

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 include a collection of successful suggestions for fostering fun social and physical environments based on our applied experiences, as well as those shared with us during parent- and coach-education workshops. These tips and activities target specific fun-factors and determinants for encouraging a young

**TABLE 7.3** Select suggestions for fostering a fun social environment

<i>Peer Relationships</i>	<i>Coach–Athlete</i>	<i>Parent–Athlete</i>	<i>Individual</i>
<p><b>Positive Team Dynamics</b></p> <p><b>Team Rituals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tip</u>: Incorporate team-building activities at the beginning of the season to establish social relationships and create team cohesion built on respect.</li> <li>• <u>Activity</u>: At the first practice, have athletes say two things they enjoy doing outside of the sport they are playing. This team-building exercise gives athletes the chance to discover common interests among one another.</li> </ul> <p><b>Team Friendships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tip</u>: Declare the playing surface a ‘Positive Play Zone’ where acceptance of all abilities and cooperative behaviours boosting confidence and motivation are the norm; negative behaviours (e.g. teasing, ridiculing) are not permitted in the zone.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positive Coaching</b></p> <p><b>Learning and Improving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tip</u>: During small-sided games, pull an athlete aside that is having difficulty performing a specific skill for quick individualised instruction while the others continue to play. After a few tips and practice repetitions, encourage the athlete to join the play again. Avoid stopping everyone to address one athlete. If several of them are making the same mistake, briefly stop the activity, demonstrate the incorrect and correct way of performing the skill, then allow play to resume.</li> </ul> <p><b>Mental Bonuses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Activity</u>: A ‘Mistake Ritual’ helps to ‘reset’ after making an error. Two fingers swept across the brow can signal ‘no sweat’. This can help the athlete leave the mistake in the past and focus again on the immediate play.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Game Time Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tip</u>: Require that spectating behaviour at youth sporting events mimics that of other types of youth performances or shows (e.g. positive cheering). This includes refraining from yelling at athletes, coaches, or referees. Keep things in perspective by remembering the difficulty involved in performing well in front of an audience, especially one that is not kind and supportive.</li> </ul> <p><b>Mental Bonuses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tip</u>: Set up a conversation between coaches and parents early in the season. Establish clear objectives that maintain a child-centred focus on skill development by having fun.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positive Team Dynamics</b></p> <p><b>Team Friendships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Activity</u>: Create a ‘family-like’ atmosphere among teammates to foster a sense of belonging by placing them in small groups to warm up, stretch, and do practice activities together. Switch up the groups every few weeks. Emphasise the importance of encouraging and supporting family members. Praise these behaviours often.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trying Hard</b></p> <p><b>Learning and Improving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tip</u>: Create an inclusive social atmosphere that will allow children to give their full effort during the physical aspects of the game without fear of being singled out or embarrassed for mistakes that are part of the learning process. This reduces the fear of making mistakes.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 7.4** Select suggestions for fostering a fun physical environment

<i>Peer Relationships</i>	<i>Coach–Athlete</i>	<i>Parent–Athlete</i>	<i>Individual</i>
<p><b>Trying Hard</b></p> <p><b>Learning and Improving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activity:</b> ‘Success squad’ includes forming partners or small groups and asking each athlete to write out a goal for the week. Partners/groups support and push each other toward achieving their goals each week. Switch partners weekly until each athlete has been paired with everyone.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tip:</b> Use unconventional games in practices with crossover skills. Many fundamental movement skills are transferable between sports. For example, a flag football station fosters technical development of running, dodging, throwing, and catching. This can be a fun, engaging way to improve overall skill development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mental Bonuses</b></p> <p><b>Team Rituals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tip:</b> Keep conversations to and from the sport arena supportive and light; focus conversations before practices/games on what the athlete is looking forward to most; focus post-play discussion on what they did well and what was the most fun.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning and Improving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tip:</b> Use the ‘PCE (pronounced peace) approach’, which includes providing <i>positive</i> feedback, followed by <i>constructive correction</i>, and ending with <i>encouragement</i> when coaching. This fosters motivation to continue trying hard to improve rather than dwelling on mistakes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Positive Team Dynamics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activity:</b> ‘I got your back’ includes having athletes writing their name on a sheet of paper followed by the word ‘Strengths’ and taping it to their back. Then have them walk around and write down a strength they see in each one of their teammates. Have them read their list to the team, hang on lockers, or place inside a luggage tag so they can attach it on their sport bag. Encourage them to keep it somewhere everyone will see it.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tip:</b> When a team has diverse skill levels, to ensure playing time for all, play less developed athletes early in games rather than at the end. This reduces putting less experienced athletes in high-pressure situations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Game Time Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activity:</b> Using a ‘fun badge’, designate a parent each week to act as the team fun liaison (TFL). The TFL leads by example, reminds parents of allowable sideline behaviours, and curbs behaviours impeding athletes’ fun as it occurs. This ensures sideline behaviour is respectful towards the athletes, coaches, and referees.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Practices and Games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tip:</b> Allow athletes opportunities to try each position in a game. As the season continues, ask which position they like best and why. If they like certain ones because they lack skills and confidence to play others, focus on developing the skills of those positions prior to selecting which position to play.</li> </ul>

athlete's personal engagement in activities according to the quality relationship she or he has with peers, the coach(es), parent(s), and within her or himself. These suggestions are by no means exhaustive; instead, they are launching points for promoting further innovative ideas towards systematic efforts to intentionally integrate fun for young athletes.

## Conclusion

The knowledge provided in this chapter can and should be shared to educate and alleviate common misconceptions of fun, particularly among adults responsible for structuring young athletes' sport experiences. In fact, awareness of these fun fallacies is a critical first step towards shaping more accurate schemas for fun. Consequently, greater accuracy in our understanding of fun will facilitate purposeful, systematic efforts to integrate and establish fun as a youth sport standard.

## References

- Aspen Institute Sports & Society. (2015). *Sport for all, play for life: A playbook to get every kid in the game*. Retrieved from <http://youthreport.projectplay.us/>.
- Bailey, R., Hillman, C., Arent, S., & Petitpas, A. (2013). Physical activity: An underestimated investment in human capital? *Journal of Physical Activity & Health, 9*, 1053–1055.
- Bengoechea, E. G., Strean, W., & Williams, D. J. (2004). Understanding and promoting fun in youth sport: Coaches' perspectives. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 9*, 197–214.
- Cairney, J., Bedard, C., Dudley, D., & Kriellaars, D. (2016). Towards a physical literacy framework to guide the design, implementation and evaluation of early childhood movement-based interventions targeting cognitive development. *Annals of Sports Medicine and Research, 3*, 1073.
- Chairat, C., Naruepon, V., Li, F., & Harmer, P. (2009). The sport commitment model: An investigation of structural relationships with Thai youth athlete populations. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science, 13*, 123–139.
- Côté, J., & Hancock, D. J. (2014). Evidence-based policies for youth sport programmes. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 8*, 1–15.
- Côté, J., Turnnidge, J., & Vierimaa, M. (2016). A personal assets approach to youth sport. In K. Green (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Youth Sport* (pp. 243–55). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- Eitzen, D. S., & Sage, G. H. (2009). *Sociology of North American Sport* (8th ed.). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth sport involvement in sports. In M. R. Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental Sport and Exercise Psychology: A Lifespan Perspective* (pp. 145–164). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Garcia C., Garcia L., Floyd J., & Lawson J. (2002). Improving public health through early childhood movement programs. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance, 73*, 27–31.
- Harter, S. (1978). Effectance motivation reconsidered. *Human Development, 21*, 34–64.
- Iñigo, M. M., Podlog, L., & Hall, M. S. (2015). Why do athletes remain committed to sport after severe injury? An examination of the sport commitment model. *The Sport Psychologist, 29*, 143–155.

- Nicholls, J. G. (1989). *The Competitive Ethos and Democratic Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Petlichkoff, L. (1992). Youth sport participation and withdrawal: Is it simply a matter of FUN? *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 4, 105–110.
- Santi, G., Bruton, A., Pietrantonio, L., & Mellalieu, S. (2014). Sport commitment and participation in masters swimmers: The influence of coach and teammates. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 14, 852–860.
- Scanlan, T. K., Carpenter, P. J., Schmidt, G. W., Simons, J. P., & Keeler, B. (1993). An introduction to the sport commitment model. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 15, 1–15.
- Scanlan, T. K., & Simons, J. P. (1992). The construct of sport enjoyment. In G. C. Roberts (Ed.), *Motivation in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 199–215). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Snyder, C. (2014). The path to excellence: A view on the athletic development of U.S. Olympians who competed from 2000–2012. Initial Report of the Talent Identification and Development Questionnaire to U.S. Olympians (S. Riewald, Ed.), USOC Sport Performance and Coaching Education Divisions.
- Visek, A. J., Achrafi, S. M., Mannix, H. M., McDonnell, K., Harris, B. S., & DiPietro, L. (2015a). The fun integration theory: Toward sustaining children and adolescents' sport participation. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 12, 424–433.
- Visek, A. J., Mannix, H., Chandran, A., Achrafi, S., Beckley, L., McDonnell, K., & DiPietro, L. (2015b). *The FUN MAPS pattern-matched across sex, age, and competition level: Gender and developmental assumptions debunked*. Presentation at the Association for Applied Sport Psychology Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN.
- Visek, A. J., Mannix, H., Chandran, A., Cleary, S. D., McDonnell, K., & DiPietro, L. (2017). *Towards further understanding in youth sport: A test of the gender differences and similarities hypothesis*. Manuscript submitted for publication.