STATE OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE REPORT



'22 / '23 REPORT

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The student-athlete experience: Through the eyes of the student-athlete, their coach provides a trust-based relationship and a psychologically safe environment that challenges each athlete – physically and mentally – to create growth in their respective sport.

This experience – the desired, powerful outcome of the human dynamic that exists between a coach and their athletes. It shapes how student-athletes think, feel, and behave. It affects their resiliency, attitude, and self-worth. It impacts them not just during their season, but for years, likely a lifetime. Every coach leaves an indelible mark on their athletes that will either propel or inhibit their growth. Pause and consider the power of this entire paragraph...

Coaches know about this experience. Parents know it too. So do athletic directors, club owners, and everyone at Ecsell Sports knows. We all know it because we've all experienced the experience that has shaped our own lives. And something so powerful, so life changing, so instrumental in the development of young women and men, should be more understood.

We believe the student-athlete experience should be studied, analyzed, and documented. It should contain data, fact, and most importantly, resources on how coaches can more positively affect it. And quantifying the experience for every coach, in every sport, should not be optional because there is too much at stake. And those in power – ADs, club owners, coaches, and even parents have the ability to make sure every student-athlete has a way to share their experience.

Welcome to year two of the State of the Student-athlete Experience Annual Report.

I won't dwell on coaching data; you will hear that from our research team in the balance of this report. What I will say is our student-athletes are in good hands, as evidenced by 61% of student-athletes who rated their coach a 9-10. But like anything else you only hear about percenters: a track coach who for years has fostered fear and mental abuse in his student-athletes, you only hear about a small percent. A volleyball coach who shames her athletes for their weight. A football coach who is stupid enough to believe that using a racial slur will be a motivator. Yes, they are out there, and we can ferret them out, but that is not why we do what we do.

We work for teams, schools, and clubs who understand the long-term impact of the student-athlete experience and want to improve it. We work for those who believe that coaches should grow, every day,

just like they expect from their athletes. We work for those who believe student-athletes should have a voice. And we work for those who want to hear their voice – for what they may read are words regarding their coaches like...

"She has made me a better player and person, she is such a good role model and is someone whom I look up to."

"He makes us feel important and like we are a valued part of the team. Never does anything but support us and I know I can trust him with anything"

"I just wanted to say how proud I am of you. You really have changed so much since my freshman year and you've become such an awesome coach. I trust you 100% and working hard, and killing my body is so easy when I know what's at the end:) Let's go get that hardware!!"

Yeah, that's why we do what we do. We help create a world where everyone can experience what it feels like to have a great coach.



BILL ECKSTROM FOUNDER & CEO



SIX THEMES

With the help of our robust research methodology, we have identified these six coaching themes to be most crucial for improving the student-athlete experience. We then quantify a coach's effectiveness within these themes and provide detailed, easy-to-understand reports to ADs and coaches. That report is your program's playbook for consistent coaching growth.

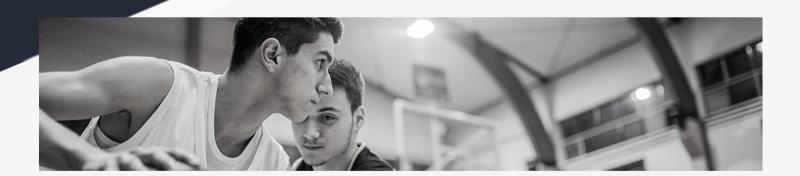


CONNECTION



Building relationships of trust with student-athletes.

- **40%** of student athletes believe their coach is a top performer in our Connection Theme.
- There is a **58%** difference in average Connection scores between top and bottom coaches.
- The biggest difference in a single item in the Connection Theme centers on fun. Top performing/great coaches makes playing the sport fun for their student-athletes (94% v 21%).
- Student-athlete experience is **22%** higher when their coach is strong (not top) in the Connection Theme.



- "She's really good at relating to us on many different levels. She always makes sure that practice is fun while putting in the work we need to."
- "I think that he could work on making practice more enjoyable without taking away the difficulty."

AD PROFILE: JASON RYAN

HOW THIS AD FOCUSES ON ATHLETES

- The AD creates a growth mindset across his entire department.
- Unbiased Coaching Effect Survey results allowed the AD to understand the impact on the lives of their athletes.
- Coaches incorporated Ecsell Sports methods beyond the locker room and into the classroom.

8.3

LIFE LESSON RATING

My coach teaches lessons about life that go beyond this sport.

TOP 2 THINGS
I'VE DONE IN MY CAREER

DEPARTMENT MOTTO



WE STRIVE TO IMPROVE
JUST LIKE WE ASK OF OUR
STUDENTATHLETES.

7.8

SCHOOL RATING

How would you rate your overall student-athlete experience at your school?

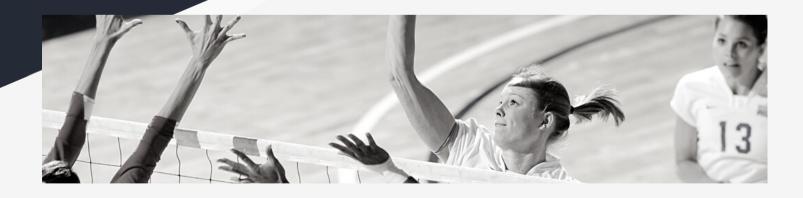


PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



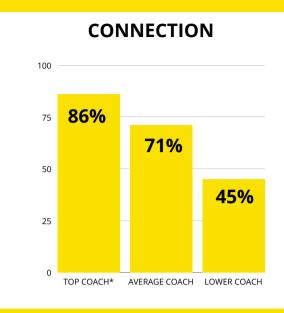
Constructing an environment that allows student-athletes to be their own true self without fear of negative consequences.

- 31% of student athletes believe their coach is a top performer in the Psychological Safety Theme.
- Student-athletes are almost **5x** more likely to want to work hard in practice when they have a coach who is strong in our Psychological Safety Theme.
- Assistant coaches score **9%** higher in our Psychological Safety Theme over other coaches.
- Coaches who are score stronger in our Psychological Safety Theme are **26%** higher in teaching lessons that go beyond the sport.

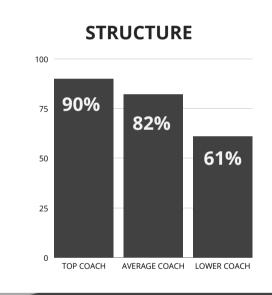


- + "Making sure that when you make your first mistake that it's okay and that everyone makes them."
- "Make athletes feel more comfortable with making mistakes."

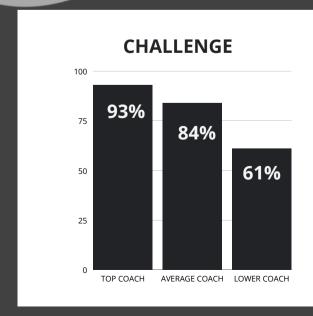
THEME SCORES BY COACH WITH HIGH LIFE IMPACT SCORES













RESEARCH

One of the things we love most about data and research is that it is an ever-evolving opportunity to discover something new. Over the past year, we have enthusiastically jumped into the student-athlete experiences shared with us through our Coaching Effect Survey. There's an ocean of information to wade through. We live for these fun, challenging, and educational times.

The main takeaway from the data is that the most significant gap between high-performing and low-performing coaches is in our Connection theme. This means that student-athletes see a substantial difference in how the best coaches respect, engage and build trust with them compared to other coaches. We also have discovered fascinating little data nuggets, such as coaches with solid communication skills being 17 times better at listening to their student-athletes than coaches who aren't great communicators. What a considerable differentiator!

Finally, we have begun looking at the role gender plays in the student-athlete experience. In this initial exploration, we are seeing that the gender of the coach and the student-athlete impacts many aspects of the student-athlete experience. At the most basic level, this research highlights the need for more representations of females in coaching positions and as role models for student-athletes.

Our survey and the types of data we collect reflect a changing world. For example, we have made small modifications to our Coaching Effect Survey questions to understand the student-athlete experience better. These edits will allow us to continue gathering excellent longitudinal data while improving our work and knowledge. As we look to the future, we are excited to explore more about transformational and transactional coaching behaviors. This data will help us capture insights about behaviors coaches value and how these influence their coaching outcomes.

We look forward to sharing some of the fascinating outcomes of the work that we've been doing in the coming pages. Data is powerful. Ours has a lot of heart. We can't wait to hear how it impacts your coaching and shapes the lives of your student-athletes.



STACIA JORGENSEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH



WILL ECKSTROM JR. DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND ANALYTICS

STRUCTURE



Establishing an organized, consistent, and predictable team environment.

- **75%** of Student-athletes report that their coach is strong in Structure.
- Only one-third (34%) of student-athletes strongly agree their coaches have excellent follow-through with doing what they say they will do.
- Coaches who are high in structure are **14x** more likely to set goals with their student-athletes.
- **80%** of student-athletes report that their coach holds all team members accountable in a consistent way.



- + "Explains what we need to get done and sets up good practice for us to get stuff done."
- "Set expectations for practice. This is good and bad because usually at practice everyone does what's best for them but some people take advantage of the relaxed rules."

BEHIND THE DATA: Q&A WITH RESEARCH

High school sports in America have never been more competitive or more intense – both for players and coaches. So, while only 2% of participants will ever hoist a state championship trophy in the air, how can we ensure the other 98% of student-athletes find value and significance in their sports experience? By working with ADs and club directors to coach their coaches. The assessment helps them understand the very big idea of Transformational versus Transactional coaching.

In this edition of Behind The Data: Q&A, Senior Director of Marketing, Mikal Brotnov sits down with Stacia Jorgensen, Executive Director of Research, and William Eckstrom Jr., Director of Research and Analytics, to explore how months and months of heavy research produced a straightforward 4-minute assessment that is helping change how coaches coach.

Why is the Transactional versus Transformational Assessment important to Ecsell Sports Clients?

Stacia Jorgensen, Executive Director of Research:

It's important for two reasons. First of all, in Bill's Tedx Talk, he explains how sometimes, when we learn about new ideas, like transactional versus transformational coaching, it can stir up feelings or experiences or emotions that make it hard for some people to connect with the message. The disconnect can be for a variety of reasons, but generally those individuals struggle to see how it applies to their own personal lives. So, the assessment is critical because it allows coaches, parents, teachers, all sorts of different people, to think about these concepts in a way that's really personal to them.

All of this segues into the second reason: self-awareness is hard.

Will Eckstrom Jr, Director of Research and Analytics

We measure everything we do. Everything we contribute to our clients revolves around a journey of growth for coaches. That journey leads to a lot of transformational coaching behaviors. What we view as elite coaching, can be described as transformational. So by and large, we're always striving to reach transformational levels within our own business and for all coaches. We're continually exploring this; defining it; and measuring it. It's exciting.

Two big questions. Why do you think coaches should take this assessment? And what benefit will coaches get out of taking this assessment?

Will: Everyone is always on a journey of growth. The first step to making real progress is self-awareness. So just taking a step back, looking at the questions we ask and taking a good look at yourself can make you aware of a lot of things you hadn't already considered.

BEHIND THE DATA: Q&A WITH RESEARCH

Stacia: I second that.

One of the main things that I hope comes from this, is that coaches start to think differently about how they're coaching or find some different way to challenge themselves. Self-awareness is hard, but the assessment can get them to consider the impact of their coaching, how they might improve, and what sort of things others around them are doing.

Ideally, it's a conversation starter. If you and a colleague take the assessment and get different results, well, then why did you get different results? What is your colleague doing differently? How can you learn from each other? How can you challenge each other? How can you hold each other accountable so you can improve how you coach, how you lead, and how you engage with your team members? At the very least, I hope people engage with it in a way that helps them think more about their behaviors, their values, and the impact they can have.

How, then, does the assessment help student-athletes?

Will: Everything we do is based around that very concept. We want to inspire introspection among our coaches, to evaluate what it is they're doing and be a little more mindful about how they're impacting their athletes. The student-athletes are the direct beneficiaries of the learnings their coaches gleam from the assessment.

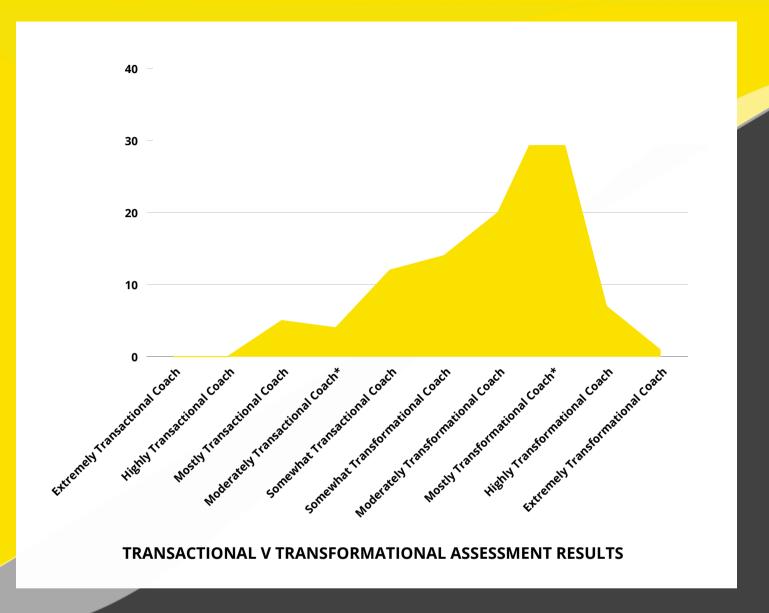
Stacia: Big things start in small places and in small ways. Even if someone walks away from having taken this assessment and thinks, "You know what? I'm going to change this one small thing in how I coach!" That can have huge impact on student athletes because they could walk away from a practice feeling more encouraged or confident in their skills. That's some powerful stuff!

Can you share one big takeaway that you had in working out the methodology?

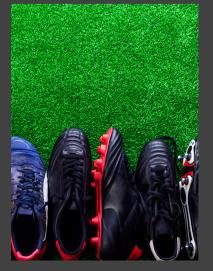
Will: Most of us are constantly aware of transactional and transformational behaviors to some degree. But to finally understand how intrinsic the two are, to see how our work actually synergizes them from the ground up was pretty powerful stuff.

Mikal: Thank you both for your incredible work and your dedication to our mission.

TRANSACTIONAL v TRANSFORMATIONAL









"22 / '23 STATE OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE REPORT

COMMUNICATION



A coach's capacity to effectively share information, strategies, and expectations with their student-athletes.

- **98%** of high performing coaches are clear about their expectations for their student-athletes each season.
- The key difference between coaches who are and are not strong in this theme is in how they
 communicate feedback. Coaches who provide feedback to their team members by identifying and
 delivering feedback in tailored ways to each student-athletes score higher in the Communication
 Theme.
- The student-athlete experience is **3x** better when the student-athlete feels listened to by their coach.
- Coaches who are strong in the Communication Theme are **17x** better at listening to their studentathletes.



- + "I love how she communicates with us and always encourages us to do better."
- "He could do a better job of communicating with us exactly what he expects/wants from us."

COACH PROFILE: CHRISTINA BOESIGER

FOCUS ON STUDENT-ATHLETES

- The connection theme is critical for Coach Boesiger and her student-athletes. Allows Coach Boesiger to focus on developing "good people."
- Coach Boesiger uses the Coaching Effect Survey to strengthen bonds between team mates so they play at an elite level.
- By focusing on fearless playing allows her athletes to feel safe.

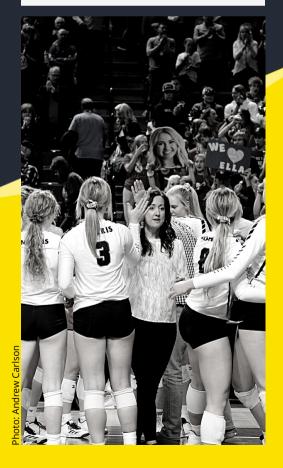
9.1

LIFE IMPACT SCORE

My coach teaches lessons about life that go beyond this sport.



TEAM MOTTO



PLAY HARD.
LOVE EACH
OTHER.
DO WHAT
WE DO.

9.2 2022 COACHING SCORE



CHALLENGE



Creating unique growth opportunities for each student-athlete that moves them out of their comfort zone.

- Two-thirds (67%) of student-athletes report that their coach is effective at navigating stressful situations.
- Coaches lead in ways that makes student-athletes feel like they are better at their sport are **7.6x** more likely to teach lessons that go beyond the sport.
- High performing coaches score **47%** higher in the Challenge Theme than their low performing counterparts.
- When coaches are strong in the Challenge Theme, the student-athlete is **3.5x** more likely to have a positive student athlete experience.



- "My coach tries his best to push us even when we are about to give up he tries to keep pushing us so we become a better athletes and we have a better mindset."
- "Don't stress us out more when we are already stressed when we aren't playing well."

COACH PROFILE: RYAN REEDER

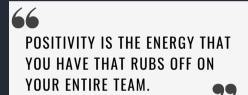
FOCUS ON STUDENT-ATHLETES

- Coach Reeder believes that team culture has grown tremendously since focusing on the student-athlete experience.
- Coach Reeder knows that his teams behavior is directly related to his own behavior.
- Coach Reeder believes that the data from his student-athletes allow him to build trust between the athletes and the coaching staff.

9.6

"BE LIKE" SCORE

If I were a coach I'd like to be like this coach.



COACHING PHILOSOPHY



ARE YOU
BEING A
GOOD
HUMAN
BEING TO
OTHER
PEOPLE?

29

PSYCH SAFETY SCORE

Increase between Y1 & Y 2

WATCH



230K
COACHINGATHLETE
INTERACTIONS
SURVEYED

SKILL DEVELOPMENT



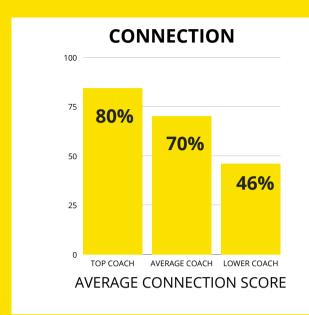
Advancing competence and technique so student-athletes perform to the best of their ability.

- Student-athletes report that Assistant Coaches are stronger than head coachesat the Skill Development Theme (83% v 79%).
- Coaches who are strong in Skill Development are better at giving individual feedback during each
 practice session to their student-athletes when compared to coaches who are not strong in this theme
 (75% v 28%).
- 96% of top coaches are great at letting their student-athletes know when they do something well.
- There is no difference in mean Skill Development scores based on the length of experience/interaction a student-athletes has with their coach. In other words, coaches who have worked with a student-athletes for only a few months can be just as impactful on the skill development of a student-athletes as a coach who has worked with a student-athletes for years and vice versa.



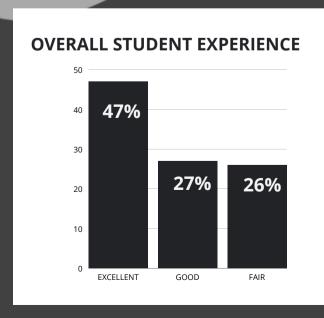
- "My coach shows how to counter moves that have been used against me so I don't get caught in the same position."
- "The only downfall is coach doesn't know technique."

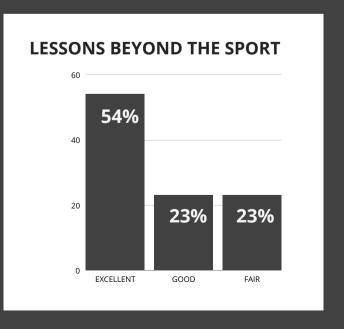
RESEARCH- CONNECTING THE DOTS ACROSS CATEGORIES





RESEARCH SHOWS THAT COACHES THAT SCORE HIGHER IN CONNECTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ALSO SCORE HIGHER IN OVERALL STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND PROVIDING ATHLETES WITH LIFE LESSONS BEYOND THE SPORT.

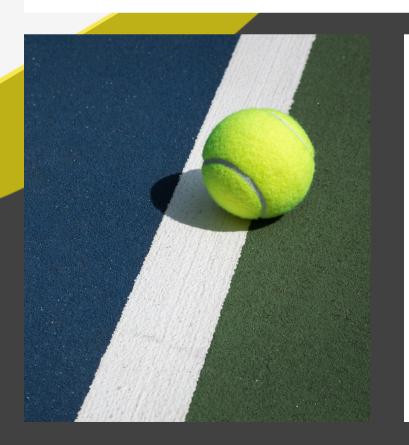




GENDER & SPORTS

Fifty years of seeing the impact of Title IX prompted us to think about how we can further improve the student-athlete experience. This summer, we witnessed some firsts from Olympic athletes when USA Olympic Gymnast Simon Biles removed herself from various competitions. She understood that her above-the-shoulders abilities were suffering. It's something we at Ecsell Sports work to instill at every level of competition. This fall, Serena Williams officially retired from tennis. Her titles and championship behaviors are endless. Greats like Serena and Simone feel otherworldly. But they, too, started right where your student-athletes are today. Closer to all of us, *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted that falling participation rates in women's high school basketball should cause alarm. They believe the wear and tear on the body is pushing this exodus. We think there's more to it than just physical realities.

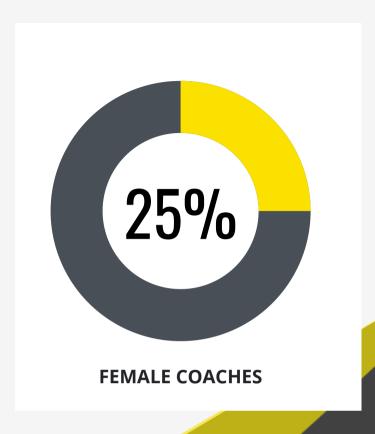
We are just in the beginning stages of what we believe will create more profound insights into the realm of athletics. Ecsell Sports is proud to share some very early takeaways surrounding the intersections of gender and sports. Every student-athlete is more than a data point. It's a heart and a future. We hope this starts deeper discussions about how every one of us shapes the student-athlete experience.

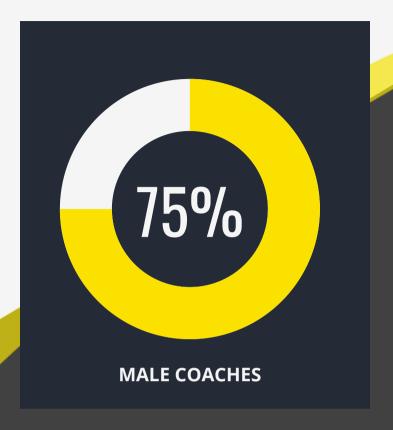


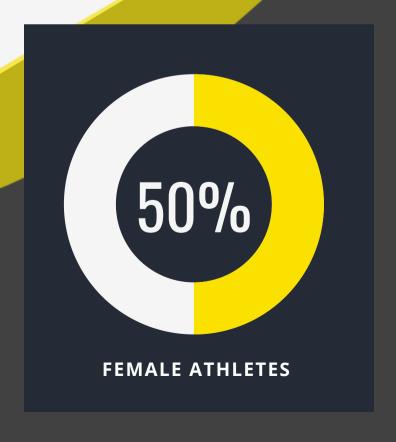
⁺3%

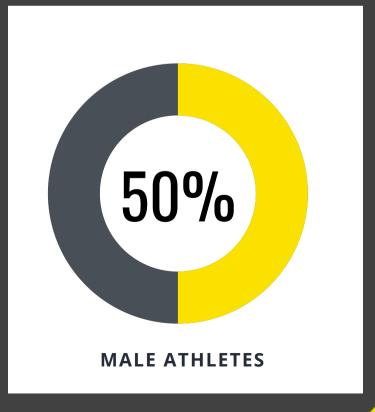
FEMALE COACHES SCORE
HIGHER THAN MALE COACHES
IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

GENDER & SPORTS









GENDER & SPORTS

FEMALE COACH | MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

47%

FEMALE COACH | FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

29%

FEMALE COACH | MALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

3%

MALE COACH | FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETE

21%

- Female coaches more often engage with student-athletes on a personal level by asking them about their life outside the sport (57% for female coaches and 54% for male coaches).
- Male coaches are more likely to overreact than are female coaches (43% versus 36%).
- Male coaches are more likely to talk about the importance of mindset and attitude than are female coaches (89% versus 83%).
- Male student-athletes are more likely to perceive their coach as being good at the Structure theme than female student-athletes (82% versus 77%).

There's two periods: before Title IX and after.

Billie Jean King won the U.S. Open, the French Open and the Wimbledon championship in 1972. But if you ask the tennis monarch to name her most coveted trophy from that historic year, we're betting it's not from one of those prestigious tournaments.

(And we're not talking about the trophy she won after beating Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of Sexes," either. Although it might be a close second. Besides, that came a year later in 1973.)

Rather, we're referring to a symbolic trophy from 1972 that King no doubt holds close to her heart – one that female student-athletes have coveted for the past 50 years, and one that King had a significant hand in. But, then, the passage of Title IX changed women's sports forever.

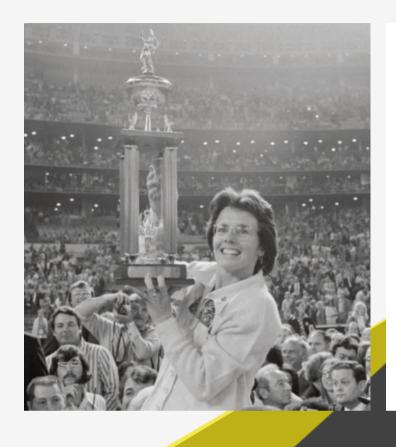
A milestone in U.S. civil rights

This year, on June 23, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which is considered one of the most significant pieces of civil rights legislation in America's history. Dr. Bernice R. Sandler, senior scholar at the Women's Research and Education Institute in Washington, D.C., widely known as the godmother of Title IX, told Forbes, "Title IX is probably the most important law passed for women and girls in Congress since women obtained the right to vote in 1920."

Designed to protect people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance, Title IX states:

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Seems fairly straight-forward, right? Unfortunately, in the arena of U.S. politics, few things are ever that simple. And Title IX has certainly not been without controversy as it has evolved over the past 50 years.



1 27

FEMALE ATHLETES PRE TITLE IX

990%

PARTICIPATION RATES FOR FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES

2₅

FEMALE ATHLETES POST TITLE IX

Substantial progress

In 1972, 58% of college students were male and 42% were female. By 2010 those numbers had flipped: 57% of college students were women, and that number has continued to increase, according to the Brookings Institution, a non-profit public policy research group based in Washington, D.C.

In 1972, men earned eight times as many PhDs as women. Today, women earn more doctorates than men. Women also earn more degrees in the sciences than men. In addition, at the elementary and secondary levels, girls get better grades and participate in more extracurricular activities.

As Thomas DiPrete and Claudia Buchmann put it in The Rise of Women, "Women have not merely gained educational equality with men; on many fronts they have surpassed men by a large and growing margin."

Simply put, women kick gluteus maximus. And they can do so with equal opportunity, thanks to Title IX.

Women in sports

Title IX's effect on opportunities for females to participate in athletics has been monumental. Before Title IX, one in 27 girls played sports. Today, that number is two in five, according to the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), which Billie Jean King created in 1974.

Former WSF president Donna de Varona says Title IX has had a tremendous effect on women's sports: "Since 1972, thanks to increased funding and institutional opportunities, there has been a 545% increase in the percentage of women playing college sports and a 990% increase in the percentage of women playing high school sports."

King, who spent the 1960s and early 1970s relentlessly campaigning for parity in women in sports, played a pivotal role in the passing of Title IX. She appeared on Capitol Hill to testify on behalf of Title IX and speak to its need for girls and women advancing in their sports.

Another female athlete and administrator who championed Title IX was Dr. Christine Grant who helped shape, define and implement the legislation in 1972. She was involved in women's collegiate athletics for nearly 50 years and was the longtime lowa women's athletic director.

Sadly, she won't be here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title IX, as she passed away recently, on Dec. 31, 2021, at the age of 85.

Still work to do

In recent years, federal regulation under Title IX has become increasingly contentious. And, presently, the overwhelmingly successful civil rights law has become a hot-button political issue.

In 2011, the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education advanced a series of new sexual-harassment rules and launched investigations into several colleges where allegations of sexual harassment emerged. Then, in 2016, it issued a "Dear Colleague Letter" on transgender rights that required schools to allocate access to sex-segregated facilities, such as bathrooms, showers and dorm rooms, on the basis of a students' gender identity rather than their biological sex.

While that letter was eventually rescinded, transgender rights are now being debated in federal courts, and the current administration plans to include a range of protections for transgender students in the new Title IX rules, including their rights to access school bathrooms that match their gender identity and participate in school sports.

And though some progress has been made, racial inequality continues to need attention within Title IX, including equal access to sports at the high school level as well as the data needed on minority participation in athletics.

In other words, even after 50 years, Title IX is still evolving. Amendments to the law continue to be debated and the outcomes will affect diverse student-athletes on all levels. Knowing how your school's athletics will need to adapt will be paramount in the coming months.

TEDx TALK

My latest TEDx Talk spotlights two types of coaches: transactional and transformational. What are the differences, and why is it imperative to the student-athlete experience that a coach aspire to be transformational? Watch Bill's Talk or read his answers to those questions below.

All coaches – from high school and club level to the most elite college programs – want to win. That's not breaking news. Winning is a goal they all share. But what varies substantially is the path they take to get there.

Some coaches take a traditional developmental road that allows for little else than drills, conditioning, game strategy and skill development. And when these behaviors are executed with a single focus on winning, that's when coaches become stuck in a developmental rut. A transactional rut.

Other coaches, the ones who aspire to create more than a robotic athlete, the ones who desire to develop young minds beyond courts and fields, see a broader path that puts the focus where it should be: on the overall student-athlete experience. These coaches create trust-based connections, provide psychologically safe team environments and know how to challenge student-athletes in a healthy way – so athlete growth is maximized. These are transformational coaches.

These are two sharply divergent paths that lead to two different types of student-athlete experiences. And yet, the transactional coach and the transformational coach share one important commonality: How they coach can shape student-athletes for the rest of their lives.

Let that sink in.

Why words and actions matter.

What a coach says and how they say it is paramount to the growth of a student-athlete. Words and actions can last a lifetime. Or, in my case, 46 years.

When I was a young student-athlete, I idolized Bart Starr, one of the greatest NFL quarterbacks of all time. I wanted to be him. A lofty dream? Perhaps. But that's the level I aspired to reach. However, my middle-school coach blocked the path to that dream. He was a transactional coach who chose winning over building relationships and creating an environment where I felt safe. In fact, I didn't even feel safe enough to disclose a shoulder injury which inhibited my ability to throw, so all coach could see was an athlete who couldn't execute his offense. I was ridiculed, mocked, and then benched. That coach stole my confidence,

TEDx TALK

trust, and connection to the team.

Now, 46 years later, that negative experience motivated me to create Ecsell Sports so that other student-athletes don't have to experience the same transaction.

Why we do what we do

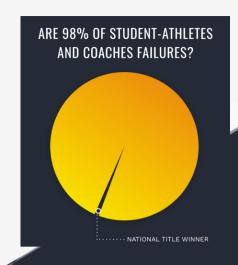
I've used my student-athlete experience to help guide Ecsell Sports by showing that transformational coaching leads to student-athletes truly excelling.

We've created an entire program and methodology to help coaches get there, and it begins with three core objectives:

- Quantifying your coach's impact through the eyes of the studentathlete.
- Creating a gameplan and setting goals for improving the overall experience, which may involve team wins, but success or failure will never be defined by wins.
- Positively impacting the student-athlete's overall experience.

We've based our methodology on new research that asks ADs, club owners and coaches to rethink "winning" and "success." Using extensive data on the student-athlete experience, we've come to understand the critical difference between transactional versus transformational coaching. Coaches who focus on improving the student-athlete experience, as opposed to only focusing on trophies, are the ones whose teams have the greatest chance of achieving peak performance.

In the end, what we offer is insight. Priceless, life-changing insight into the state of athletic programs and the coaches that foster growth in student-athletes during their most formative years.







CHAT WITH AN EXPERT



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