

September 2011

Volume 22:09

Discovery

Scripture & Science for Kids



What Good are **SPORTS?**

KYLE BUTT

Sports and athletic games have been around for thousands of years. The Olympic games go all the way back to 700 B.C. Many Christians today participate in sports and athletic events. The Bible often refers to sports, and it sometimes talks about Christian living with illustrations from wrestling, foot races, and other athletic events. Since this is the case, it would be good to ask ourselves what things are good about sports. How can sports and athletic activities be helpful to a Christian?

The truth is, sports and athletic training teach us many things that can help us build strong Christian characters. First, many team sports can teach us about teamwork and looking out for the needs of others. For instance, in basketball, no one likes a person who is a ball hog. Ball hogs want the ball, want to shoot the ball all the time, and rarely pass it to their teammates. Not only do ball hogs frustrate their teammates, most of the time they cause their teams to lose. When we look to the Bible, we can see that being a ball hog shows selfishness and is something to avoid. Philippians 2:4 tells us that we should look out for other people's interests as well as our own. As

we grow, we can learn to be unselfish by being a part of team sports and learning not to be ball hogs. We can learn to look out for the interest of our teammates. This lesson can greatly help us to build the personality trait of selflessly working together with others.

Athletics can also help us learn to take care of our bodies. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." God gave you a body, and He wants you to take care of it. By participating in sports like soccer, track, and many others, we can keep our bodies healthy and strong. When we play sports, we can have fun, while at the same time keeping our bodies fit. In addition, scientific studies have shown that physical exercise helps our minds to stay sharp and work properly. The exercise habits we can learn playing sports help us throughout

our lives to stay physically healthy and strong. We must remember, however, that although physical exercise is profitable for some things (1 Timothy 4:8), we must never let it crowd out more important things like studying the Bible, praying, and teaching others about Jesus.

Another thing sports can help us do is learn to control our tempers. Most people do not like to lose. But no one ever wins every single game. When we lose a game, it is tempting to get angry, yell at the referee, or blame our teammates. When we look to the Bible, however, we learn that God does not want His children to get angry over trivial things like winning or losing a game. James 1:19-20 says: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Sporting events help us learn to control our tempers. For instance, if basketball players lose their tempers and yell at a referee, then the referee will often call a technical foul on them. Sometimes the referee will even throw them out of the game. The rules of the game give the referee the authority to penalize players who do not control their tempers. This system teaches players to control their anger and learn to accept things they do not like.

There are many other valuable lessons that sports and athletic training can teach us, such as self-discipline and persistence. We can see that playing sports can be a valuable part of the life of a Christian. We must remember, however, that sports should never be given more attention than God, His church, and His will. We must not allow our enjoyment of sports to get in the way of doing God's will. We must always seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), and have the wisdom to see how sports can help us be stronger Christians.

BASKETBALL

TEAMWORK

Are You Giving 100%?

ERIC LYONS

It was a normal, everyday kind of play...but a play I'll never forget. A base runner on the opposing team was attempting to steal second base. Our catcher quickly threw the ball to second in hopes that our shortstop would catch it and apply the tag before the runner reached the base. What happened? Actually, I don't remember if the runner was safe or not, but I do remember what I saw in the newspaper the next morning.

There it was—a picture of the play at second on the front cover of the sports section. What immediately caught my eye, however, was what I saw in the background. It was a slightly blurring picture of me in the outfield. But I wasn't just **in** the outfield; I was **standing** in the outfield with my glove down by my side. I wasn't running. I wasn't walking. I wasn't even in an athletic position ready to play. Rather than running toward second base to back up the play like I had been taught for years (in case of a bad throw), I was lazily standing and watching everything take place.

The picture was proof that I had played that game without giving it my all. At the very next practice the coach addressed the team saying, "Did anyone see anything wrong with the picture in the paper? **Eric, did you see anything wrong with it?**" I did, as did my coach, who was very upset with my lack of effort.

Much more important, what about your effort in the "game" of Christianity, sometimes called the Christian race, in which there is an "imperishable crown" at stake? Are you giving it your all? Are your head and heart in the game? Or, are you just standing on the sidelines (or in the outfield) hoping no one notices your lack of effort? When the apostle Paul spoke of competing in this "Christian competition," he said to "run in such a way that you may obtain...the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24). Paul described his own effort in the Christian's spiritual race with expressions such as, "I discipline my body," "I run," "I fight," "I press on," and "reach forward" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27; Philippians 3:12-14). Let me ask you: Can you truthfully use these same phrases to describe your efforts in the Christian race? If not, make a change today! Don't get caught idly standing by. Give it **all** you've got **all** the time (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23).



WINNING IS NOT EVERYTHING

DAVE MILLER

Do you like sports? Do you have a particular sport you like to play? Most Americans love sports. Thousands go to football and baseball games at high schools, colleges, and professional football stadiums. Millions watch sports on television. Americans have a reputation for being winners and taking their sports seriously. It's easy to be very competitive when playing games with friends and opposing teams. In fact, you can find yourself so focused on winning and beating the other players that you forget about everything else—including what is right and what is wrong.

Take, for example, the famous all-star baseball player who was at bat last year. The pitcher threw the ball so close to the batter that it appeared as if the ball hit the batter. Immediately, the batter winced as if the ball had hurt him, causing the umpire to let him walk to first base. In a post game interview, the batter admitted the ball only hit his bat—not him. Many felt that what the batter did was a clever, perfectly proper action. But the Bible calls his action lying and deceit. It is very easy to forget the all-important principles of honesty, fairness, justice, and truth when you want to win a game.

One day a Jewish lawyer tried to test Jesus by asking Him a question: "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" How would you answer that question? Out of the entire Bible, what is the greatest, most important point? Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 to say that the most important feature of life is to love God, which includes the closely connected need to love people (Matthew 22:35-40). Loving God and loving people are "the bottom-line." They are what life is all about. They are to be **the focus** of our lives.

You see, Christians are Christians 24/7. That means that everything we do in life is guided by Christian principles. It means that a Christian never loses sight of the ultimate, central purpose of life—to please God and love others. Yes, it is good when you approach a task (like a game or sport) to try your hardest and give it your best. But we have to always keep in mind that our number one concern is acting the way God wants us to act. It means treating others the way we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). If you would not want an opposing player to lie or cheat during a game, neither should you. And even if he does cheat, the Christian always keeps in mind that God is in His heaven looking down on our actions, hoping that we will please Him by living the way we should.

So always remember: winning is not everything. In fact, winning falls way behind the higher, critically important concern of reflecting Jesus in our actions, and caring for the well-being of others—even enemies and opponents. The next time you are playing a game, look over at the other team and ask yourself: "Do I want them to go to heaven? What can I do to set a Christian example before them?"

ACTIVITY PAGES

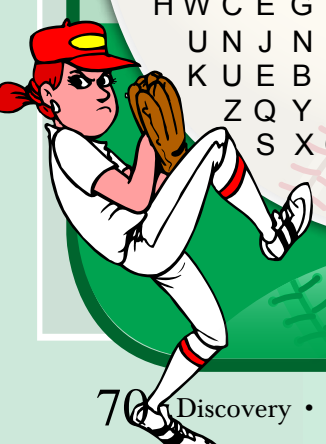
Help Iguana Don run the right course to Digger Doug's Underground.

MAZE



SOLVE, FIND, AND CIRCLE

L X E
 A L X O O A V
 Y L U C X T V A V A E
 S N S V S I X U E S P Z F
 O K W B R F A B F T C J S K O
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 K U E B Y W D H Y H Q X P C J
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 H D W Q X Y Y
 S P F



1. Apostle who wrote about running the Christian race _____
2. Games that go all the way back to 700 B.C. _____
3. The book of the Bible in which you read that man is "fearfully and wonderfully made" _____
4. Your body is His temple _____
5. The brother to whom Paul wrote that physical exercise is profitable for some things _____
6. God created the human body on this day of Creation _____
7. He said: "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" _____
8. One word that summarizes following the greatest command _____



TRUE OR FALSE

1. Winning is more important than what is right or wrong.
2. Many team sports can teach us about teamwork and looking out for the needs of others.
3. The human body evolved in only six million years.
4. You are "fearfully and wonderfully made."
5. The greatest athletes in the world are living proof that humans evolved from slime.
6. We should look out for other people's interests as well as our own (Philippians 2:4).
7. Teaching others about Jesus is more important than sports.
8. The most important thing to do in life is to play sports.
9. Running track is more important than running the Christian race.
10. We should always strive to treat others the way we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12).



Dear Digger Doug,

Is it wrong for people to hunt animals for sport?

It is not hard to see that our culture has changed a lot over the past few decades. This has caused many people to question the actions of previous generations. One example is the treatment of animals. In today's society, there are many animal rights groups, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), who claim that it is morally wrong to hunt and kill animals. Is there any truth to this? No, there simply is not. In the Bible, we read about several examples of animals being hunted and killed for the benefit of mankind. David killed both a lion and a bear to protect his father's property (1 Samuel 17:35). Esau hunted game to bring some to his father to eat (Genesis 27:5). Jesus commanded Peter to catch a fish with a hook and get money out of its mouth to pay the temple tax (Matthew 17:27). God himself supplied animal skin to Adam and Eve to wear (Genesis 3:21). Hunting and fishing have provided many benefits to mankind throughout the years. They have also provided many benefits to animals, since hunting and fishing are important wildlife management tools. Scriptures do not say that hunting and fishing are immoral. In fact, the Bible encourages hunting and fishing. The false idea that hunting is immoral has risen from animal rights groups who base their opinions on emotion (and often evolution) and not the Bible.



APOLOGETICS PRESS, INC.
 230 Landmark Drive
 Montgomery, AL 36117
 (800) 234-8558 (Orders)
 (334) 272-8558
 www.DiscoveryMagazine.com
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Nonprofit Organization
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Montgomery, AL
 Permit No. 513

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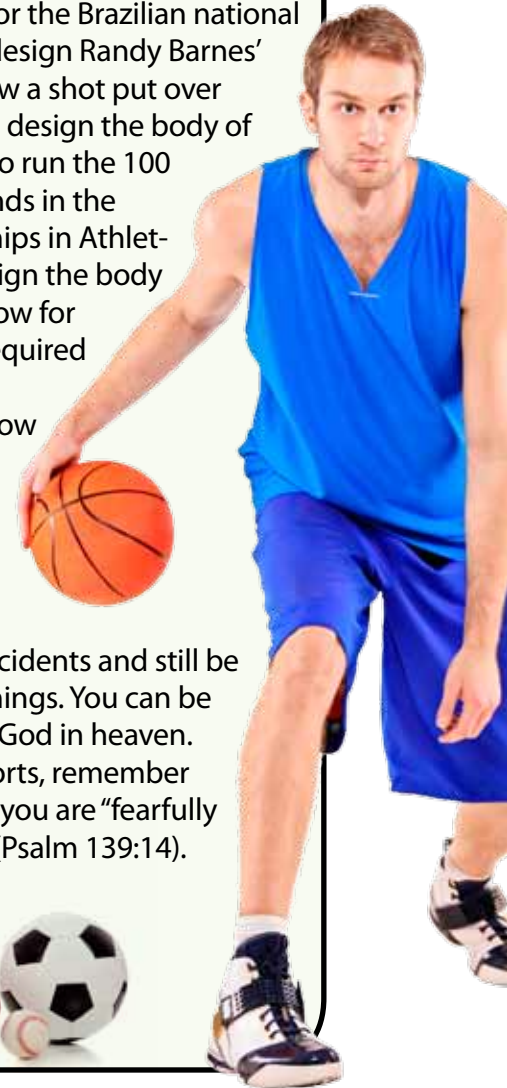
JEFF MILLER

If you watch television much, you have probably seen or heard about athletes who can do some pretty amazing things. But have you ever stopped to think about the fact that such feats mean that there must have been a Chief Designer that made the human body? Atheists would have us to believe that the human body can do amazing things without needing a designer. Supposedly, humans are the end product of millions of random accidents, starting from non-living stuff. Does that make sense to you?

Someone had to design the human arm and shoulder that would allow Aroldis Chapman of the Cincinnati Reds professional baseball team to throw the fastest pitch ever recorded in a major league baseball game last year—105 mph. Someone had to design the leg muscles that would allow Michael Jordan to jump all the way from the free throw line—15 feet away—to dunk a basketball in a hoop 10 feet in the air. Someone had to design the arm and mind of the great, professional football quarterback, Steve Young, that would allow him to achieve career statistics including over

33,000 yards and 232 passing touchdowns. Someone had to design the human lungs and body that would allow the stamina and strength required for the soccer player, Ronaldo Nazario, to score some 62 goals for the Brazilian national team. Someone had to design Randy Barnes' arm to allow him to throw a shot put over 75 feet. Someone had to design the body of Usain Bolt to allow him to run the 100 meter dash in 9.58 seconds in the 2009 World Championships in Athletics. Someone had to design the body and mind that would allow for the focus and stamina required by professional baseball great, Nolan Ryan, to throw seven career no-hitters and 5,714 strike outs.

Such feats are extraordinary. The human body and mind could not be a product of millions of accidents and still be capable of doing such things. You can be confident that there is a God in heaven. Next time you watch sports, remember that, and praise God, for you are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).



ANSWERS

SOLVE, FIND, AND CIRCLE: 1. Paul; 2. Olympics; 3. Psalms; 4. Holy Spirit; 5. Timothy; 6. six; 7. Jesus; 8. love. TRUE OR FALSE: 1-F; 2-T; 3-F; 4-T; 5-F; 6-T; 7-T; 8-F; 9-F; 10-T.

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