

41 Ways to Use Sports in Your Youth Ministry

You don't have to be a former NFL, NBA, MLB, or NHL athlete to reach athletes. You simply need a willing heart and a desire to reach out. This list will provide new, sports-minded ways to help use the readymade highway of sports to make an impact on youth in your community.

1. Pick one day of the week to pray for each of the athletes and coaches at a school. Have members of your leadership team also commit to praying for specific athletes, and let the athletes know that they are being prayed for.
2. Attend their sporting events to show your support. Sit with the student cheering section. Athletes are most at home on the playing field, and you can generally get a good picture of who they are by watching them compete.
3. Recruit former or current coaches to your youth volunteer staff. They may only be able to help during the off-season, but it will be worth it. They know how to work with athletes.
4. Film the games. Invite the team to your church for a film and pizza night.
5. Ask the coach if you could start a chapel program (or Team Talk – less threatening) for the team. Go to www.teamchaplains.org to get valuable resources to begin chaplain ministry.
6. Host a pre-game chapel at your church, and serve a pre-game meal with a speaker. Invite the team, coaches and even the cheerleaders!
7. Sponsor a “Breakfast of Champions” before school at your church. Serve breakfast and schedule a former or current athlete to share his/her testimony.
8. Send notes of encouragement or congratulations to those athletes and coaches that you read about in the newspaper.
9. Attend practices to show your support. Visit with the athletes before or after practice, and be available to them.
10. Coach for a season. Ask the coaches if they need a part-time assistant for the season.
11. Sponsor the “Athlete of the Week.” Invite the deserving athlete and his/her team to attend a special recognition dinner or meeting. Host a banquet for all of the winners at the end of the year.
12. Attend the school-sponsored athletic banquet. Ask the Athletic Director if you and your church can help in anyway.
13. Send out a monthly sports devotion to athletes who may or may not have a real connection to your youth group. Utilize FCA’s Daily Impact Play e-devotional. Go to www.fca.org/impactplay to sign up.
14. Drop a “praying for you” card to each coach at the beginning of the season to let them know that they can contact you if they have any spiritual needs or prayer requests. Set up prayer times with the coaches to find out their prayer requests.
15. Send birthday cards and get well cards (to injured athletes) to let them know that you

care. A note or a phone call will make a big difference. (School secretaries tend to have all of the information that you need for this... Make friends with them!)

16. Put together a "Road Trip Care Box" of treats for a team that has an away game. Place a special note of encouragement in the box.
17. Coffee mugs with the local name and church logo on it (filled with candy, a note and a donated gift certificate) can be distributed after a tough loss or big win to show the coach that you are thinking of them.
18. Have your youth leadership team adopt one team at one school every week. Have them send those athletes a letter encouraging them and telling them that they are praying for and appreciate them.
19. Use FCA's Sharing the Victory magazine (www.sharingthevictory.com). Send copies to athletes in your youth group. Keep several in your youth office.
20. Use the posters from the above magazines to decorate your youth room and offices.
21. Focus some of your youth meetings and outreaches on athletes, or give them an athletic theme. Use sports videos in your youth meetings and small groups. FCA has tons of sports testimonies on DVD's.
22. Establish a small group for the athletes in your youth group. Encourage them to meet once a month to learn how to live out their faith on the field.
23. Work with the local FCA staff to develop a relationship with the FCA Huddle (school club). It means a great deal to the Huddle to have outside help. It also gets you on the campus. FCA loves volunteers. Go to www.fca.org to the top of right side of website, click Find Local FCA Staff.
24. Use FCA's One Way 2 Play - Drug Free! Program to reach out to athletes. Challenge your youth to live and play alcohol and drug free.
25. Honor a different team each month (perhaps a team sportsmanship award), and give each member something special to recognize his/her team participation. Have a speaker give a testimony who is affiliated with that sport.
26. Present a gift to each athlete and coach at their end-of-the-season banquet/dinner.
27. Partner with the local FCA office to host an FCA outreach. Use your church, have your youth band provide music, prepare skits and schedule a sports-oriented speaker. Invite all area FCA Huddle groups and local youth groups.
28. Schedule "5th Quarters" and "Game Days" throughout the year. These are meetings directly after athletic competitions. Target one particular school.
29. Hold a weekend leadership conference for athletes. Focus on developing leadership skills for them to make a difference on the field and in the locker room.
30. Develop a discipleship program specifically for the athletes in your group. Help them to realize that their team is a mission field, and that God desires for them to develop not only athletic leadership, but also spiritual leadership. FCA has many great resources for this.
31. Bring back college athletes from your youth group to share their testimonies at meetings.
32. Have an athletic event such as a softball, volleyball, basketball, or flag football game in which different athletic teams from the local school compete against each other. Halfway through the game schedule speakers to share a message. Make it a potluck and give away prizes donated by local businesses.
33. Host a "Day of Champions"—an event filled with relays, dodge ball games, volleyball games, etc. End the day's events with a program. Have a speaker share a testimony and invitation, and provide music and pizza.
34. Sponsor a 3-on-3 basketball tournament. Include food, awards and testimonies in the day's events.

35. Send to every athlete and coach on a team the FCA Sports New Testament with a personal note of encouragement as they approach the upcoming season. Additionally, FCA has a Coach's Bible and an Athlete's Bible which can also be used as special gifts.
36. Offer clinics in various sports. Use college and professional athletes and coaches as often as possible. Share the gospel. Have Bibles available for those who do not have them.
37. Encourage your youth and youth volunteers to get involved in their respective athletic departments. Possible ways to get involved include becoming parking attendants for sporting events, volunteering to work in the concession stands, helping with playing field maintenance, etc.
38. Ask youth members to provide free child care for coaches that they might have a "Coaches Night Out."
39. Send athletes from your youth group to an FCA camp – over 260 camps to choose from. Secure scholarships for those who cannot afford to attend.
40. At each youth group meeting, have a "Sports Update" to report recent team scores.
41. Utilize FCA's resources to minister to coaches and athletes – The Coaches Bible, The Athlete Bible, Heart of a Coach and Heart of an Athlete (90 day devotional books), The Starting Line (8 weeks of Christian basics), Team Studies, Legacy Builder study, just to name a few. Go to www.FCAGear.com to see all the resources.



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