Full Team Ahead: The Benefits of Team Sport to Canadian Sport

A Report prepared for the Canadian Team Sports Coalition

SOFTBALL CANADA

Welcome

WE KNOW THAT SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PRODUCE POSITIVE HEALTH EFFECTS IN INDIVIDUALS. However, until now the particular value of team sport to Canadian sport has not been explored. The first order of business for the Canadian Team Sports Coalition – composed of the organizing bodies of all 21 Canadian team sports – was to complete this exploration.

The truth is that team sport adds significant value to the Canadian sport system and to the well-being of Canadians: as the entry point to sport for millions of young Canadians, team sport offers unique experiences that teach life skills and contribute powerfully to the fabric of Canadian society. Indeed, team sport fosters an unparalleled sense of national pride – one that connects all of us to a common purpose.

It is interesting to note that while a growing body of research suggests that sport can produce a range of benefits across a broad socio-economic spectrum, most of these studies do not distinguish between individual sport and team sport. The purpose of this report is to examine the particular benefits of team sport to individuals, families, communities, the economy and society. Drawing from recently published reports and studies that espouse the value of sport in general, this report makes the case that team sport has distinct benefits and offers unique contributions to the Canadian sport system.

CANADIAN BLIND SPORTS - GOALBALL

Team Sport Coalition

BASEBALL CANADA

CANADA BASKETBALL

Canadian Blind Sports Sports Aveugles Canada

CANADIAN BROOMBALL FEDERATION

CANADIAN CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Canadian Lacrosse Association

CANADA

CANADIAN WHEELCHAIR RUGBY ASSOCIATION

CANADIAN CURLING ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE CURLING

Field Hockey CANADA Hockey sur gazon

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RINGETTE CANADA RINGUETTE CANADA

RUGBY CANADA

CANADA

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Full Team Ahead: The Benefits of Team Sport to Canadian Sport

A Report prepared for the Canadian Team Sports Coalition

Dina Bell-Laroche, Rachel Corbett and Kevin Lawrie
September 2009

CANADA BASKETBALL

INTRODUCTION

"Winning a team sport medal shows that a country has a well-developed sport system"

WE KNOW THAT SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PRODUCE POSITIVE HEALTH EFFECTS IN INDIVIDUALS. However, the particular value of team sport to Canadian sport has not, thus far, been explored. Yet team sport adds significant value to the Canadian sport system and to the well-being of Canadians: as the entry point to sport for millions of young Canadians, team sport offers unique experiences that teach life skills and contribute powerfully to the fabric of Canadian society. Indeed, team sport fosters an unparalleled sense of national pride – one that connects all of us to a common purpose.

It is interesting to note that while a growing body of research suggests that sport can produce a range of benefits across a broad socio-economic spectrum, most of these studies do not distinguish between individual sport and team sport. The purpose of this report is to examine the particular benefits of team sport to individuals, families, communities, the economy and society. Drawing from recently published reports and studies that espouse the value of sport in general, this report makes the case that team sport has distinct benefits and offers unique contributions to the Canadian sport system.

Two recent studies, *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada*, published by the Conference Board of Canada[1], and *What Sport Can Do: The True Sport Report*, published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)[2] have painted a compelling picture of the health, social, and economic impacts of sport. Earlier studies, such as the Mills Report,[3] have also documented these benefits. Moreover, the Conference Board of Canada report concluded that *"sport significantly strengthens Canada's economy and society"*[4] and the CCES report substantiated how community sport can: improve health and well-being, put children and youth on a positive life course, build stronger and more inclusive communities, promote environmental sustainability and contribute to the Canadian economy. Earlier research conducted by the CCES also demonstrated that no other sector of community life matches sport's ability to connect young people to positive adult role models, or its ability to provide opportunities for positive development and the acquisition of important life skills.[5]

A recent publication by the Sport Matters Group[6] argued that: *"Sport as an activity, and sport and recreation as a system, involves and engages more Canadians in more ways than virtually any other part of community"*. This report documented the effects of sport: it teaches people skills, it encourages the expression of core Canadian values, it increases physical and mental health, it has no exclusion or bias, and it serves as an incubator for democracy and a locus for leadership. The report concluded that sport and recreation are powerful instruments that can contribute to the development of social capital, which in turn helps to build and maintain the society that we desire.

The purpose of this report is not to restate the case that sport offers significant benefits to society, but rather to investigate the unique contributions that can be made by *team sport.*[7]

Intuitively, one would expect that team sport makes a unique contribution to the Canadian sport system by virtue of the basic characteristics of team sport: children are first exposed to sport through team sport in their schools, being a member of a team affords opportunities for social integration and leadership development, the most popular sports in Canada are all team sports, team sport programs such as hockey and soccer exist in virtually every community in Canada, and the sheer numbers of individuals involved suggests that team sport makes a greater financial contribution to sport tourism and sport spending.

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[1] Bloom, M., Grant, M. and Watt, D. (2005). *Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada.* The Conference Board of Canada, Ottawa, ON.
[2] Mulholland, L. (2008). *What Sport Can Do: The True Sport Report.* Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Ottawa, ON.
[3] Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, Sub-Committee on the Study of Sport in Canada. (1998). *Sport in Canada: Leadership, Partnership and Accountability – Everybody's Business.* House of Commons Ottawa, ON.
[4] Bloom et. al. p. iv.
[5] Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. (2002). *Canadian Public Opinion Survey on Youth and Sport.* (2002). Ottawa, ON.
[6] Sport Matters Group. (2006). *People and Sport: Organizational Self Assessment Process.* Ottawa, ON.
[7] For the purposes of this report, we have adopted the definition of "team sport" used by Sport Canada: *"Team sport refers to sports that are practiced between opposing teams, where the players interact directly and simultaneously between them to achieve an objective. The objective generally involves team members facilitating the movement of a ball or similar item in accordance with a set of rules, in order to score points."* This definition is provided in the Sport Canada report, Summer Team Sport Strategy, a draft document dated December 23, 2008.

It can also be presumed that athletes who have achieved international success in individual sports may very well have developed their fundamental athletic skills in team sports.

Our research team set out to explore the presumptions that team sport offers distinct benefits, that it occupies unique place in the Canadian sport system, and that it makes a significant contribution to Canadian society.

This project was commissioned by the Canadian Team Sports Coalition: an advocacy group composed of over twenty Canadian team sport organizations. The research team consisted of Dina Bell-Laroche and Rachel Corbett of the Centre for Sport and Law and researcher Kevin Lawrie, with administrative support provided by Robin Witty. Further information on the research team is presented in Appendix 1 of this report.

The methodology was three-fold and consisted of: reviewing existing published national and international literature (particularly literature in peer-reviewed journals); conducting structured and detailed interviews with 17 highly respected sport leaders (these key informants are identified in Appendix 2); and administering a national survey of high performance athletes. This survey garnered 572 responses over a span of a few weeks in August 2009.

The initial findings are presented in this report and are organized around the benefits of sport participation, athlete development, psychological and social development, leadership development, economic development and national pride. A number of briefs accompany the main report. These briefs include: an executive summary, an analysis of the athlete survey results, a proposed research agenda for team sport, and observations and recommendations from sport leaders for strengthening team sport in Canada.

Of the ten most popular sports reported by the Conference Board of Canada, seven are team sports, including the top five (ice hockey, soccer, baseball, basketball and volleyball).

RUGBY CANADA

SPORT PARTICIPATION

"The most popular sports in Canada are overwhelmingly team sports"

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS CANADA[8], ADULT CANADIANS AGED 15 YEARS AND OLDER ARE INVOLVED IN MORE THAN 100 DIFFERENT SPORTS, ranging from bobsleigh to ice hockey. Involvement encompasses participation, volunteering (as a coach, official or administrator) and attending/watching sport events. Although participation rates are fairly similar for team sports and individual sports (with 23.6 percent of adult Canadians participating in a small number of team sports and 24.5 percent participating in a much larger number of individual sports), involvement in other areas of sport is markedly different. In terms of volunteering, 15.9 percent of adults volunteer in team sport settings, while 3.7 percent volunteer in individual sport setting. In terms of attending sport events, 57.9 percent of Canadian adults attend team sport events while 12.1 percent attend individual sport events. Clearly, significantly more Canadians are involved with team sport than are involved with individual sports.

It is also worth examining the relative popularity of different sports. According to Ifedi[9] , and based upon Statistics Canada data, the most popular sport in Canada (in terms of participation) is golf, followed closely by ice hockey. Other popular sports cited by Ifedi are swimming, soccer, basketball, baseball and volleyball – four of which are team sports. Of the ten most popular sports reported by the Conference Board of Canada, based on data collected through their own surveys, seven are team sports, including the top five (ice hockey, soccer, baseball, basketball and volleyball).[10] Examining participants alone, six of the top ten sports are team sports. The Conference Board of Canada data indicated that over 24 million adult Canadians are involved in team sport either as active participants, volunteers or spectators, whereas only 10 million adult Canadians, or less than half the team sport number, are involved in these roles in individual sports.[11]

Bloom et. al. attribute the popularity of team sports to a number of factors. *"One reason is that they are ... sports with important family association for many people. They are often played by several members of the family at the same time, including both adults and children, which may encourage other family members to seek to share in the experience by volunteering and attending".*[12] The existence of professional sport leagues also fuels involvement: *"Another plausible factor [for the popularity of team sports] is the visible presence of professional leagues for all these sports except volleyball. These professional leagues are broadcast widely and predominantly throughout Canada, creating popular role models whom people want to emulate, thus building a broad constituency for participation".*[13]

It is also interesting to look at the popularity of sports among boys and girls. According to Ifedi, soccer has become the sport of choice for Canadian children aged 5 to 14.[14] Boys and girls recorded the same participation rate in 2005 (44 percent) – higher than for any other sport. In fact, soccer has ranked as the number one sport activity for active children for many years. Other popular sports for boys, in order of participation rate, are ice hockey, swimming and basketball. For girls, soccer has the highest participation rate and it is followed by swimming, basketball and ice hockey, in that order. Combining boys and girls participation together, five of the six most popular sports for the 5 to 14 cohort were team sports, in the following order: soccer, ice hockey, swimming, basketball, baseball and volleyball.[15]

Clearly, team sport dominates the agenda for active children in Canada. It represents the logical point of entry into sport for many reasons. Many children join a team because they have a friend who is on a team. Children are introduced to team sport

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8 Ifedi, F. (2008). *Sport Participation in Canada,* 2005. Statistics Canada.
9 Ibid.
10 Bloom et. al., p. 5. If the popularity of a sport is measured by the numbers of Canadians who participate actively, volunteer and attend, then the ten most popular sports in Canada are (in descending order): ice hockey, soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball, golf, swimming, football, skiing and curling. Sport popularity as measured by active participation alone, disregarding volunteer participation or being a spectator, ranks the most popular sports as follows, in descending order: ice hockey, golf, baseball, skiing, soccer, volleyball, basketball, curling/tennis (tied) and swimming/bowling (tied).
11 These global figures are extracted from the data shown in Table 2 of the Conference Board of Canada Report, and are based on the National Household Survey of Participation in Sport, 2004.
12 Ibid. p. 6.
13 Ibid. p. 6.
14 Ifedi, p. 11.
15 Ifedi p. 34

early in school. Team sport offers an attractive social aspect that is perceived by children and parents as fun. Team sport is generally more affordable for families. Team sport also provides opportunities for an entire family to get involved in an activity. For example, while children participate, parents can become involved as volunteer coaches or administrators. Research has shown that parents of children enrolled in sport programs enjoy the ancillary social activities as much as the main event.[16] When families participate in sport together, children have the opportunity to be exposed to the value of volunteering from their parents and in turn may remain involved in sports as volunteers as they grow older.[17]

It is also interesting to examine sports participation in the United States, a country that has excelled at team sport success on the international stage. In a 2000 study, it was found that over 26 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 played on an organized sports team. This number represents over half of all children within that age bracket.[18] During the 2008 Olympic Games, the CEO of the US Olympic Committee stated publicly that: *"We (the USOC) really measure our success on how well our teams do"*. The Chairman of the USOC stated: *"The (USOC) was focussing on the success of team sports because those sports were the ones most likely to inspire children to exercise"*.[19] Participation in team sport in the United States is very high, just as it is in Canada. However, unlike in Canada, team sport in the United States is clearly a priority for support and funding.

The athlete survey conducted as a part of this research corroborates the point that team sports are the entry point for sport and that they are important to an athlete's development. Of the 572 athletes who participated in the survey, 48 percent were currently active in a team sport and 43 percent were active in an individual sport. Eight percent identified that they were active in both team and individual sports. It is worth noting that 78 percent of these respondents were members of national teams or had previously been members of national teams, and thus can be considered athletes of elite calibre. Eighty nine percent of the athlete respondents indicated that they had participated in team sport as a developing athlete.

CANADIAN SOCCER ASSOCIATION

The survey also asked athlete respondents to indicate at what level of the sport system they had participated in team sport. In declining order, the participation of those who responded to this question occurred at: high school (82 percent), elementary/middle school (77 percent), club (73 percent), provincial/territorial teams (64 percent), college/university (45 percent), and Canada Games (25 percent).

Research indicates that participation in sport leads to benefits in many areas. The much higher overall participation rates in team sport and team sport's greater popularity across the board (from participants to volunteers to spectators and fans) speak powerfully to the disproportionate contribution that team sport makes to overall community, social and economic benefits. Further, our athlete survey results suggest that the large majority of elite athletes, in both individual sports and team sports, previously participated in team sport at the scholastic, collegiate, club, and provincial levels.

Combining boys and girls participation together, five of the six most popular sports for the 5 to 14 cohort are team sports.

[16] Wann, D.L., Keenan, B., and Page, L. (2008). Testing the team identification-social psychological health model: examining non-marquee sports, seasonal differences and multiple teams. Journal of Sport Behavior, 32(1), 113-124.
[17] Janoski, T and Wilson, J. (1995). Pathways to voluntarism: Family socialization and status transmission models. Social Forces, 74(1): 271-292, and Haski-Leventhal, D., Ronel, N., York, A.S., Boaz, M. B-D. (2008). Youth volunteering for youth: Who are they serving? How are they being served? Children and Youth Services Review, 30: 834-846.
[18] Cited in Cary, P. (2004). Fixing Kids' Sports: Rescuing children's games from crazed coaches and parents. US News and World Report. Retrieved June 22, 2009 from http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/040607/7sports_2.htm
[19] Sport Canada. (2008). Summer Team Sport Strategy, draft document (December 23, 2008), p. 3

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

"The long-term physical development of children begins with team sport"

FOR MOST PEOPLE, TEAM SPORT REPRESENTS THE FIRST EXPOSURE TO ORGANIZED SPORT. Participation numbers suggest that team sport is the entry point for most young people into the sport system, and this trend continues into adulthood with the top five most popular sports among adults all being team sports.

Team sport attracts participation by young children for a number of reasons: children are exposed to team sport in school starting in the primary years; many team sports are relatively affordable for children and families; and the facilities to play team sport are not specialized and exist in most communities. For example, sports such as swimming, golf and athletics require pools, golf courses and running tracks, which are not nearly as ubiquitous as school gymnasiums, playing fields and ice rinks. Even the smallest communities in Canada can boast an ice rink, soccer pitch and baseball diamond.

Children are drawn to team sport because they want to have fun with friends, and this early association with sport and its social benefits (in the team sport setting) often carries forward to keep a child active and engaged in sport later in life. Team sport presents a unique opportunity to engage children in physical activity because children are naturally attracted to the fun and social aspects of a team. In this regard, team sport is considered to be absolutely fundamental to athlete development, providing the foundation for physical literacy that may be applied across many different sport and physical activities later in life. Team sport participation in a child's early years provides opportunities for participants to learn the core skills of running, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, coordination and balance that are intrinsic to all sports and are essential for early stages of athlete development. Many of the sport leaders interviewed, including those closely involved in the development and implementation of Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) models, remarked that team sport is the biggest contributor to the early stages of athlete development, namely the *Active Start* and *Fundamentals* stages.

In the athlete survey, respondents were asked to rate the perceived importance of team sport participation to the respondent's development as an athlete. Only three percent of the respondents declined to answer this question, and of the of athletes who did answer, over 73 percent said that participation in team sport was *very important* to their development as an athlete, and a further 20 percent said that participation in team sport was somewhat important. Taken together, 93 percent of athletes who answered the question said that participation in team sport was either very important or somewhat important to their development. Clearly, team sport provides the foundation from which future elite athletes emerge.

Respondents to the survey were also invited to provide comments about how team sports may have influenced them as athletes. Here is a sample of some of the more insightful comments from athletes competing in individual sports:

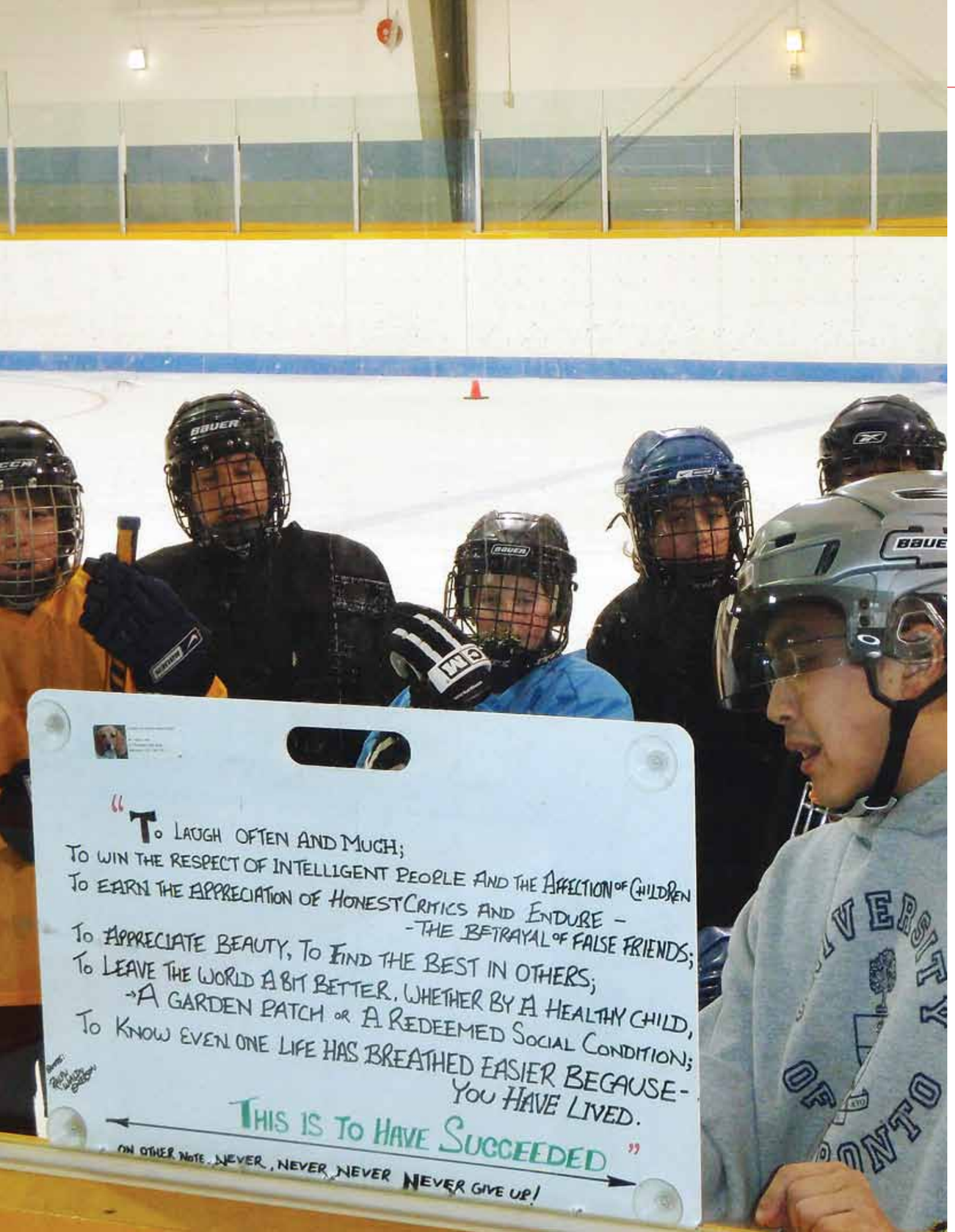
"Jouer des sports [d'équipe] comme athlète developpant m'à enseigner à aimer être active, aimer être en bonne forme, et à trouver plaisir dans la compétition car j'étais dans des situations amicales et encourageant. Si je n'avais pas ce base d'athétisme, je n'aurais pas voulu poursuire le ski de fond à un niveau tellement élevée à laquelle je me trouve."[20]

"Team sports influenced me as an athlete because they shaped my attitude towards my individual sport. Being a part of a team helps one to develop team skills that can transfer over to individual success in any sport."

"Team sport has definitely made me a better athlete - helped me develop the skills needed to succeed at the international level and helped bring meaning to my continued participation in sport."

Team sport provides the foundation from which future elite athletes emerge.

[20] Translated to English: *"Playing team sports as a developing athlete taught me to love being active, to love being in good shape, and to find pleasure in competition because I was in friendly and supportive environments. If I had not had this base of athleticism, I would not have wanted to pursue cross-country skiing to the elite level where I now find myself".*



HOCKEY CANADA

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

"Team sport teaches life lessons that extend beyond the field of play"

CANADIAN SOCCER ASSOCIATION

THERE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE RESEARCH ON THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF SPORT PARTICIPATION. This research is summarized and presented in the Conference Board and CCES reports. We know that sport also develops physical, attitudinal and behavioural skills in individuals, which are transferable to personal lives, to the workplace and to society at large. These skills include teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, enhanced communications, personal management and administrative skills[21]. Clearly, team sport by its very nature, in terms of bringing together groups of different people to work together in pursuit of a common goal, presents a superior opportunity for these skills to flourish – especially teamwork, decision-making and communications.

There is also literature suggesting that participation in team sport offers a social and character dimension not available through individual sport participation. As noted by Bloom et. al., the importance of social capital has been emphasized by the World Bank, which defines it to mean *"the shared values and rules for social conduct expressed in personal relationships, trust and a common sense of 'civic' responsibility, that make a society more than a collection of individuals."*[22] Social capital is fostered more easily in team sports, which are effectively micro-communities of people using shared values to work together towards a common purpose. According to Bloom et. al., sport works to build social capital by *"constructing associations of people that constitute social networks ... that generate trust and a willingness to interact with others outside of sport."*[23] Team sport offers the ability for such associations and networks to form more easily and, due to the popularity of team sport, to more widely spread the social capital benefits.

A 2006 study[24] demonstrated that individuals who participate in team sport have a stronger sense of belonging, are more open to learning than individuals who concentrate on individual sports, are more involved in their community outside the sport venue, and are less self-centred. More particularly, this research and a follow-up report published in March 2008,[23] suggested that participants in team sport:

- Feel more closely bound to others
- Are more apt to share values with others in the team setting
- Are more willing to get involved in their community
- Display more interest in social, cultural and environmental issues
- Are more accepting of diversity
- Are more adept at facing challenges as a member of a team
- Are better able to handle defeat and disappointment without internalizing failure and blaming others
- Are open to taking direction from others
- Recognize the value of leaders and mentors
- Become 'teachable' which can lead to success in other areas of life outside sport

In a 2008 study, Holt et. al. examined peer group experiences of teenage female soccer players.[26] The authors found five categories of peer experiences across three levels of social complexity. At the lowest level of complexity (interaction), the authors found that players learned how to integrate new members into the team and how to interact with different types of people. At the second level of complexity (relationships), players learned how to manage peer conflict. At the third and highest level of complexity (groups), the players learned how to create leadership structures and how to work together. This study of adolescent athletes pointed clearly to the powerful ability of team sport to hone important social and relationship skills. The authors also concluded that peer relationships through team sport are even more important today due to the gradual replacement of face-to-face contact by computer-mediated communication.

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[21] Bloom et. al. p. iii
[22] Cited in Bloom et. al., p. 35
[23] Bloom et. al., p. iii
[24] *Socio-cultural Differences: Individual Sports versus Team Sports. SportDecision* Newsletter (2006).
[25] *The Value Added Benefits of Team Sports (March 2008). Wellness E-Zine.* Retrieved August 14, 2009 from http://lifegetinit.greenmaplewellness.net/new/articles/article.html?artid=1024
[26] Holt, N.L., Black, D.E., Tamminen, K.A. and Mandigo, J.L. (2008). Levels of social complexity and dimensions of peer experiences in youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology.* 30: 411-431,

Several sport leaders echoed the theme that team sport participation offers unequalled opportunities for developing openness to differences and for learning to get along well with others. One sport leader said: *"The things that you learn ... in a team sport are in addition to those you acquire through sports generally. Things like cooperation, putting differences aside, focusing on a goal regardless of how you feel about others, are even more important today then perhaps it was when we were younger. I think it can help us deal with diversity – where you get exposed to broader society at a young age".* Canadian society and the Canadian workforce are increasingly diverse, and success and productivity in the workplace will depend on workers' abilities to embrace social, cultural and racial differences. These abilities are strengthened through exposure to such differences in a team sport setting.

There have been a number of studies investigating the link between scholastic sport involvement and academic success in school. Nixon[27] revealed many positive academic-related benefits from participating in school sports, including: higher grades, fewer disciplinary problems, fewer skipped classes, lower dropout rates, high graduation rates and higher academic aspirations. Nixon also noted that female athletes are less focussed on winning and more attracted to the social aspects and peer relationships in team sport. In a similar study, Coalter[28] explained that participation in school sports may lead to improvement in academic performance because of increased self-efficacy (which leads to increased self concept, self-worth and self-esteem). Increased attention from peers and from coaches as a result of sport participation also encourages academic achievement. Though neither Nixon nor Coalter explicitly distinguished between individual sport and team sport in their research methodology, the majority of early scholastic sports programs are team-based, and as such, it is primarily the team sport setting that has generated these research findings.

A similar study of adolescents in the ninth grade found that those who participated on sports teams at school were less likely to experience emotional distress, suicidal behaviour or abuse victimization than their peers who participated in other extra-curricular activities such as drama, band, clubs or other volunteer groups.[29] Sport team participants were also more likely to exercise more frequently, have a healthy self-image, and have a better diet (as measured by consumption of milk).

In a 2005 study, researchers compared the social development of seventh grade students involved in organized team sports with the social development of those not so involved.[30] Students reported their level of self-esteem, delinquent activity and drug use, and their physical education teachers rated the students' social competence, shyness/withdrawal, and disinhibition/aggression. Results indicated that team sport-involved children reported higher self-esteem than non-involved children. Their teachers also rated them more socially competent and less shy. Further, sport-involved children, including those involved in contact sports, were rated as less aggressive. Finally, sport-involved boys were less likely to experiment with drugs. The authors recommended that school boards facing financial cutbacks carefully evaluate their scholastic sport programs so as to preserve the superior benefits that team sport gives to children.

There have also been a number of studies on the benefits of team sport to older adults. Cedergren and colleagues[31] studied the social benefits of introducing the team sport of 'chair volleyball' to older, sedentary adults. Participants in the study enjoyed the challenges of learning the game, the group membership and the social health benefits of making new friends.

Several further studies on the social benefits of sport have distinguished between individual and team sport. In 2001 Schilling and Hayashi compared personal incentives and goal-setting between basketball players and cross-country runners.[32] Participants in the study highlighted personal incentives in task-related, ego-related and social-related categories. Results indicated that the basketball players had more socially-oriented personal incentives for success than did the runners. Continuing earlier research on the link between sport participation and self-esteem, Slutzky and Simpkins set out to explore whether the link was the same in team sports as in individual sports.[33] They found that participation in team sport was more likely to predict self-concept than participation in individual sport: *"More time spent in team sport activities was associated with increases in sport self-concepts which, in turn, was associated with increases in self-esteem".*[34] The authors concluded that parents and coaches should take positive steps to encourage team sport involvement, regardless of how children might compare to their peers in terms of skill.

In a 2004 study of social and moral character and sport, Rudd and Stoll distinguished among team sport athletes, individual sport athletes, and non-athletes.[35] Social character was defined as including attributes such as teamwork, loyalty, self-sacrifice, work ethic and perseverance while moral character was defined to include the values of honesty, fairness and responsibility. The authors found that team sport athletes scored higher on social character attributes than individual sport athletes, and both categories of athletes scored higher on this attribute than non-athletes. Interestingly, non-athletes scored higher on the moral character index. The authors suggested that the focus on competitiveness and winning in both team sport and individual sport may have a negative effect on moral character.

A recent news report about former NFL football player Ray Nettles tells an interesting story about the power of the team concept.[36] After being admitted to a rehabilitation facility to treat a drug addiction, Nettles' former team-mates sent him well wishes and also, unsolicited, helped to raise $60,000 towards Nettles' treatment. The author of the story wrote: *"Nettles discovered that the team concept extended far beyond the football field. It also had no time limits".*

There is no doubt that participation in all types of sport produces social benefits for the individual, which translate into community and societal benefits. However, research supports the position that team sport makes a unique contribution to the social benefits equation. The skills and attitudes that are developed in the team setting translate readily to other areas of life including the workplace. One sport leader we interviewed suggested: *"Team sport builds character in unique ways. When you think of it, we're all a team – whether in school, at work or in the community. You have a greater ability to deal with people if you've played a team sport. An athlete in an individual sport just doesn't have that experience".*

The athlete respondents to our survey had similar views about the benefits of team sports. Said one: *"Team sport has influenced me both on field and off it. I believe team sport has taught me lessons in conflict resolution, leadership, critical thinking, decision-making and many more. I would not be the athlete I am today without my team-mates pushing and pulling me to the podium."*

Said another: *"By being part of team, not only does it benefit you in your sport life, but it will benefit you in all aspects of your life. You learn so many valuable lessons that apply to everyday life. Playing a team sport makes you a very valuable commodity in the real world after your sport career is over."*

Another respondent observed: *"The influence has been tremendous - skills learned have been invaluable to me in business - teamwork, acceptance of roles, support from and by others, commitment, goals, responding to adversity and set-backs, working together, decision-making, leadership, followership - all are needed in business and all were developed in team sports."*

Finally, two athletes were very succinct in their assessment. Said one: *"I love team sports. They not only developed me as an athlete but as a person. What I learned from them is not measurable."* Said another: *"The values learned as a team player and participant have provided a pillar for an enriched life experience".*

Literature suggests that participation in team sport offers a social and character dimension not available through individual sport participation.

[27] Nixon, H.L. (2008). *Sport in a Changing World.* Boulder, CO. Paradigm Publishers.
[28] Coalter, F. (2007). *A wider social role for sport.* New York. Routledge.
[29] Harrison, P.A. and Harayan, G. (2003). Differences in behaviour, psychological factors, and environmental factors associated with participation in school sports and other activities in adolescence. *Journal of School Health.* 73(3): 113-120.
[30] McHale, J.P., Vinden, P.G., Bush, L., Richer, D. and Smith, B. (2005). Patterns of personal and social adjustment among sport-involved and non-involved urban middle-school children. *Sociology of Sport Journal.* 22: 119-136.
[31] Cedergren, A., King, K.A., Wagner, D.I. and Wegley, S. (2008). Perceived social health benefits among participants in a countywide senior chair volleyball program. *Activities, Adaptation and Aging.* 31(4): 23-36.
[32] Schilling, T.A. and Hayashi, C.T. (2001). Achievement motivation among high school basketball and cross-country athletes: A personal investment perspective. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology.* 13(1): 103-128.
[33] Slutzky, C.B. and Simpkins, S.D. (2009). The link between children's sport participation and self-esteem: Exploring the mediating role of sport self-concept. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise.* 10:381-389.
[34] Ibid. p. 385
[35] Rudd, A. and Stoll, S. (2004). What type of character do athletes possess? An empirical examination of college athletes versus non-athletes with the RSBH value judgment inventory. *The Sport Journal.* 7(2): 1-10.
[36] Frennette, G. (July 10, 2009). *Ray Nettles seeks exemption while battling a terrible illness.* Jacksonville News. Retrieved August 10, 2009 from http://www.jacksonville.com/news/metro/2009-07-10/story/ray_nettles_seeks_redemption_while_facing_a_terminal_illness

VOLLEYBALL CANADA

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

"Team sport develops a certain kind of leadership"

AS NOTED BY BLOOM ET.AL., RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT ATHLETES HAVE STRONGER LEADERSHIP SKILLS THAN NON-ATHLETES.[37]
A number of senior sport leaders interviewed as part of this research spoke at length about the powerful ability of team sport to contribute to leadership skills and in particular, to a form of leadership described as authentic leadership.

Authentic leadership can be described as a form of leadership that underscores the importance of knowing oneself and being transparent in ones actions and behaviours. Authentic leaders are more likely to 'walk the talk' when it comes to manifesting and communicating their core values and beliefs. They are concerned with modeling and fostering ethical behaviours. May et. al.[38] described these leaders: *"Authentic leaders are not necessarily transformational, visionary, or charismatic leaders. They don't stand out every day. But these are the leaders who, when called upon by the hand of fate, will be the ones who take a stand that changes the course of history for others, be they organizations, departments, or just other individuals".*[39]

In their interviews, many of the sport leaders spoke about the leadership benefits of participating in sports. They also spoke about the unique contribution of *team sport* to leadership development. This is a quote from a senior sport leader with a lifetime of experience as athlete, coach and administrator:

"[Team sport] also develops a certain kind of leadership. For instance, if you're leading in a team sport you tend to be collaborative and more of a mediator. While you can still get that in individual sport, [you] are not in a particular environment where they need to hone those skills. Within a team sport environment, you are in negotiations everyday with the other athletes, the parents, the coaches, the administrators. The art of negotiation is a skill that emerges in particular in team sports"

Team sport also offers practical opportunities to experience ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. The frequent teachable moments in team sport offer a living laboratory where the exchange of ideas and differences of opinions get played out in real time. The role of the coach in a team sport is even more important in this regard – a team sport coach is less a masterful tactician and much more a facilitator, mediator and arbitrator. The space between what is right and what is wrong is much larger in team sport settings, as coaches and other leaders in sport have to sort through the complexity of relationships, values and beliefs to arrive at an end point or resolution to which many individuals can agree.

A number of researchers have carried out studies on the leadership development potential in team sport settings. In a study of six team captains of university hockey teams, Dupuis et. al.[40] found commonalities among their leadership behaviours. Team captains had verbal communication skills, which they demonstrated by bridging the gap between coaches and players. Team captains also demonstrated appropriate task behaviour by working hard in practices and emulating preferred behaviour to the rest of the team.

In another recent study of athlete leaders on sport teams and their coaches, researchers found four common traits of developing leaders: high skill, strong work ethic, enriched cognitive sport knowledge, and good rapport with people.[41] The researchers also found that these developing leaders characterized their coaches as being: nice people, good at skill development, stimulating figures, and able to engage in mature conversation with athletes. Certainly, the athletes who responded to our survey echoed the view that team sport helped them to forge a wide array of leadership skills such as: communication, problem-solving, relationship management, conflict resolution, decision-making, group interaction, and

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[37] Bloom et. al. provide a summary of research studies supporting this finding on pp. 27-28.
[38] May, D.R., Chan, A., Hodges, T. and Aviolo, B.J. (2003), Developing the moral component of authentic leadership. Organizational Dynamics. 32(3): 247-260.
[39] Ibid, p. 248.
[40] Dupuis, M., Bloom, G. and Lougheed, T. (2006). Team captains' perceptions of athlete leadership. Journal of Sport Behaviour. 29(1): 60-78.
[41] Wright, A. and Côté, J. (2003). A retrospective analysis of leadership development through sport. The Sport Psychologist. 17:268-291.

among many others, the ability to focus on the pursuit of a common goal. Team sport taught them integrity, respect, acceptance and tolerance, and helped them learn how to handle criticism. Athletes observed that *"Team sport teaches great lessons in cooperation, teamwork and interpersonal skills", and "Being part of a team makes you a better communicator, multi-tasker and collaborator".* In summary, "members of teams are used to compromising and making things work for groups."

RUGBY CANADA

Wesch et. al. conducted a study of observational learnings by athletes – and this was one of the few studies that explicitly measured individual sport athletes against team sport athletes.[42] In this study, the authors separated observational learning into three concepts: observing skill, observing *strategy* and observing performance (for the purposes of motivation). The authors found that team sport athletes used the strategy function of observational learning more than individual sport athletes. In comparison, individual sport athletes used the skill function of observational learning more frequently. It can be inferred from this research that team sports help to hone athletes' strategy observation skills.

In a 2006 study of different types of leaders on sport teams, Lougheed et. al. distinguished between team leaders (those who are formally designated as team captains) and peer leaders (those who emerge naturally as unofficial leaders on a team).[43] The authors found that over the course of a season there were many different opportunities for leadership development among both groups of leaders. In a season when the team being studied did not compete for a championship, there were leadership opportunities for younger players to become peer motivators and learn how to emulate the established leadership behaviour of the veteran team captains. These opportunities for peer leaders to emerge alongside formal leaders, and to emulate (and/or improve) their leadership behaviour, did not exist in individual sport situations.

Two similar studies examined leadership traits on scholastic sports teams – soccer (girls), baseball (boys) and softball (girls).[44] In the soccer study, athletes were asked to evaluate each other on a leadership behaviour scale. The authors found that female athletes who scored highly on the leadership behaviour scale also scored high rankings for competence, masculinity and competitiveness. In the softball and baseball study, coaches were asked to distinguish between leaders and non-leaders. The main social and emotional indicators of leadership were aspiration level, competitiveness, emotional expressiveness, daring, responsibility, acceptance and dominance. In both studies, the authors found that perceived leaders tended to play positions of high interaction on the field.

It is suggested that the art of compromise and the ability to negotiate toward common goals are unique to team sport. It is also suggested that team sport athletes and coaches need to operate differently than they would in individual sports. Athletes in team sport have to rise above themselves and have regard for the common good of the team, even if it means making an individual sacrifice. Furthermore, to succeed as a coach in team sports, one has to develop and refine skills and competencies in the area of people management. These attributes emerge uniquely in the team sport environment and transfer readily to other domains and activities outside the sport milieu.

A senior sport leader described the unique leadership contribution of team sport involvement: *"Team sports tend to support a variety of values including the importance of making a commitment to yourself and the other members of the team; the value of responsibility; the value of working together with others towards a common goal and the value of interpersonal relationships with team-mates to develop problem-solving skills as part of a larger group. These kinds of values are manifested and harnessed only in a team sport setting".*

[42] Wesch, N., Law, B., and Hall, C.R. (2007). The use of observational learning by athletes. Journal of Sport Behavior. 30(2): 219-231.
[43] Lougheed, T.M., Hardy, J. and Eys, M.A. (2006). The nature of athlete leadership. Journal of Sport Behavior. 29(2): 142-158.
[44] Glenn, S.D., and Horn, T.S. (1993). Psychological and personal predictors of leadership behaviour in female soccer athletes. Journal of Applied Sport Psychology. 5:17-34, and Klonsky, B.G. (1991). Leaders' characteristics in same-sex sports groups: A study of interscholastic baseball and softball teams. Perceptual and Motor Skills. 72: 943-946.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"The sport tourism industry is driven by team sport"

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SPORT HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED IN RECENT STUDIES.[45] In 2004, the Conference Board of Canada reported that sport spending by Canadian households reached nearly $16 billion – which is an average of $1,938 per household.[46] This level of spending has risen significantly since 1996. There are also significant economic benefits generated by sport hosting and sport tourism. Weighill[47] reported that slightly over 31 percent of all domestic travel in Canada in 1999 was sport-related. Of that 31 percent, over 82 percent was active sport tourism, meaning that the individual was not just a spectator, but was an active participant in sport. It can be concluded that nearly a third of all travel within Canada is related to sport, and four-fifths of that travel is to play sport.

It is fairly common for hosts of larger sporting events to tabulate data in order to report on the economic impacts of their event. A very significant international event hosted in Canada recently was the FIFA Men's Under-20 World Cup: this tournament was hosted in six Canadian cities over a span of one month in 2007. The economic impact of this event was considerable: 1.2 million spectators, a domestic TV audience of 8.7 million (and 500 million around the globe), 52 live televised matches, 2,500 volunteers, $2 million generated for charity, $43.2 million generated in government taxes. Altogether, there was an economic impact of $259 million – which represents a single sport hosting record in Canada.[48]

On their web site, the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance publishes economic impact assessment reports for other high-impact sport events that have been hosted in Canada in recent years – ranging from Canada Games (2003, 2005 and 2007) to world championships in ice hockey (2006), aquatics (2005), road cycling (2003) and athletics (2003).[49] Sport tourism is the fastest growing segment of the Canadian tourism industry and it generated over $2.8 billion of economic activity in Canada in 2007 alone.[50]

However, this preoccupation with the hosting of large-scale international events and multi-sport Games overlooks the myriad of smaller tournaments hosted in communities throughout Canada on an ongoing basis. For example, the small city of Kamloops, B.C. hosted 116 sport tournaments in 2008.[51] The majority of these tournaments involved team sports. The region of Niagara in southern Ontario, which has only very recently started tracking such events and has not yet firmly established its sport tourism infrastructure, will host over 100 smaller sporting events in 2009, in addition to the major events held each year in the region such as the Canadian Henley Regatta (North America's premier rowing regatta), the Niagara International Marathon and various Ontario University Athletics (OUA) and Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) championships at Brock University.[52] The majority of these smaller events involve team sport activities such as hockey, ringette and soccer. The City of Kamloops and the region of Niagara are not atypical of small Canadian cities and regions. The sport hosting activity that occurs in these locales is replicated in many other parts of the country. While some hosting activity involves individual sports (notably track and field meets, swim meets, tennis tournaments or ski races), the majority of sport hosting involves either multi-sport Games (composed of both individual sports and team sports) or team sports alone.

There have been no studies comparing the household spending on individual sport participation versus the household spending on team sport participation. Further, studies on the economic impact of sports tourism have not distinguished between the hosting of team sport events, single sport events or multi-sports Games events which feature both individual and team sports. However, there is a strong argument to be made that the sheer popularity of team sports (in terms of participants, volunteers and attendees – who together spend the money that drives the economic engine associated with sporting activities) ensures that the vast majority of sport's economic impact flows from team sport.

[45] Publications such as the Mills Report (Note 3), the Conference Board of Canada report on the socio-economic benefits of sport in Canada, and reports and briefs prepared by the Sport Matters Group all attest to the significant economic benefits that attach to sport participation and sport hosting.
[46] Bloom et. al. p. iii.
[47] Weighill, A.J. (2002). Canadian domestic sport travel in 1999. In M. Joppe (Ed), *Accessing destinations: How do you get here from there?* Edmonton, AB.: TTRA-Canada Conference Proceedings.
[48] Montopoli, P. (2008). *FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007*, Final Outcomes. Presentation to the CSTA/Canadian Sport Tourism Congress, Ottawa, April 2008.
[49] These and other reports and statistics are available from the web site of the Canadian Sport Tourism Association, www.canadiansporttourism.com.
[50] *Niagara Sport Commission* – the Promise of Sport (2009). Brief presented at the inaugural meeting of the Niagara Sport Commission, Brock University.
[51] Tournament Capital Program. (2009). Retrieved July 5, 2009 from http://www.tourismkamloops.com/home_showSection_ID_68.html
[52] Personal communication, Dr. Laura Cousens, Brock University/Niagara Sport Commission, August 14, 2009.

RUGBY CANADA

NATIONAL PRIDE

"Team sport transforms a crowd into a community"

THE CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA AND OTHER RESEARCHERS[53] have made strong cases that sport participation (either as an active participant, a volunteer, or an attendee) helps to shape our national and cultural identities. In our interviews with sport leaders, the idea that team sports are an expression of what makes us Canadian frequently emerged. In the view of these leaders, there is something unique when a 'Canadian team' competes and succeeds. Said one leader, *"Funny thing about team sport - it almost doesn't matter which sport it is - this entire country was galvanized when our basketball team did so well [in 2000]. It sits in our memories and creates a lasting impression that stays with people for a long time. Invariably the [impact of] team sport success is longer. This translates into renewed and revived interest in sport in general".*

As noted earlier in this report, US Olympic Committee officials place heavy emphasis on the importance of team sports. Team sport success is seen as critical in order to encourage broader sport participation. This link between team sport success internationally and the promotion of sport participation domestically was identified by many of the leaders interviewed. Said one, *"You only have to see how hockey is worshipped to understand the power of team sports".* An athlete respondent in our survey summarized the impact of team sport on national identity this way: *"Team sports are the essence of what we are as a country. We seek to have unity among our diverse cultures, which is exactly what team sports do."*

While much of the evidence that team sport success is a powerful source of national pride is anecdotal, there has been some scholarly research on the psychological and social dimensions of supporting and identifying with a sports team. In the last few years Wann and colleagues[54] have developed and tested a Team Identification-Psychological Health model, which advocates that psychological and social well-being are augmented through engagement as a fan or follower of a sports team. In experimental settings, the model's predictions were supported. The authors also noted that while support of a sports team will increase psychological well-being, identification with a sports team will produce broader social well-being impacts. This research suggests that the affiliation and *identification* that families and local communities have with local sports teams can produce positive effects on psychological and social well-being. This perspective is corroborated by Cary[55], who noted that parents of children on sports teams equally enjoy the ancillary activities and the socialization that occurs around the main sporting event.

Naturally, Canadians identify with our national teams when these teams achieve international success. The experience of the men's basketball team in Sydney in 2000, the performance of our women's ice hockey teams over the last three Winter Olympiads, and the performance of our men's ice hockey team in the 2002 Winter Olympics, all galvanized our nation. In a national poll sponsored by CTV television and RDS (Réseau des sports), Canadians voted for their top 10 Canadian Winter Olympic moments – the Canadian men's hockey victory in 2002 topped the list, followed by the women's hockey victory the same year.[56] These team victories clearly had huge impacts on the Canadian psyche. Such positive engagement of our citizens in a common pursuit yields emotional, cultural and political benefits that cannot be measured by any scale.

When an individual athlete succeeds in international competition, there is a perception that the athlete did it alone, perhaps

There is a strong argument that the sheer popularity of team sports - in terms of participants, volunteers and attendees - ensures that the vast majority of sport's economic impact flows from team sports.

[53] The Mills report, see Note 3.
[54] Wann, D.L. (2006a). Examining the potential causal relationship between sport team identification and psychological well-being. *Journal of Sport Behavior.* 29: 79-95; Wann, D.L. (2006b). Understanding the positive social psychological benefits of sport team identification: The team identification-social psychological health model. *Group Dynamics:* Theory, Research and Practice. 10: 272-296; Wann, D.L., Keenan, B. and Page, L. (2008). Testing the team identification-social psychological health model: examining non-marquee sports, seasonal differences and multiple teams. *Journal of Sport Behavior.* 32(1) 113-124.
[55] Cary, P. (2004). See Note 18.
[56] *Hockey gold in 2002 voted top Olympic moment.* Globe and Mail (Toronto edition), September 21, 2009, page S-3.

supported by their coach, and that they happen to be Canadian. We respect the individual talent and dedication that made that success possible. When a team succeeds, the effect is amplified – a Canadian team galvanizes the nation in a way that an individual Canadian athlete cannot. When a Canadian team succeeds, it is as if Canada has succeeded.

Several sport leaders that we interviewed variously conveyed this idea, but one placed it into concise, clear words: *"When an individual athlete does well on the international level, I'm proud they are Canadian. When a Canadian team does well internationally, it makes me proud to be a Canadian".*

Several leaders we interviewed spoke about the amplification effect of winning a team sport medal. The impact is definitely greater than a medal earned in a single sport. Said one leader: *"The effect can be mesmerizing. We all have a need to associate and belong to something and team sports can offer that vicarious experience to anyone. It can generate a ripple effect that spreads to the point of contagion. You want to catch the virus that is team sports!"* Echoed another sport leader: *"[Team sport success] gathers everybody up and creates an excitement that is hard to define."*

FIELD HOCKEY CANADA

CONCLUSION

"To achieve their full potential, team sports require more support"

THERE IS ABUNDANT LITERATURE ABOUT THE POWER OF SPORT. It touches the lives of more Canadians than any other voluntary activity, it thrives in every community in Canada, and it engages individuals and families in ways few other forces can. The Conference Board of Canada expressed this concisely:

- Sport changes individuals and families through enhancing health, well-being, social connections, and skills;
- Sport changes communities through increasing social c ohesion and social capital;
- Sport impacts the economy through spending, job creation and sport tourism;
- Sport helps to shape our national and cultural identities[57]

The layperson, and even the sport enthusiast, might wonder why we need to distinguish between individual sport and team sport in a discussion of sport's ample benefits and impacts. Is it not enough to know that sport yields significant public benefits and is deserving of public investment?

The reason for our distinction is that individual and team sport are *not* the same. The infrastructure team sport requires, the way in which team sport is planned and programmed, the resources that team sport needs to be delivered successfully, and the manner in which team sport's achievements and successes are evaluated, are quite distinct. It makes sense, therefore, to seek to better understand how team sport might differ from individual sport in terms of its benefits to society and its contribution to the overall sport system in Canada.

This report has shown that team sports are the most popular sports in Canada. In terms of people engagement (through participating, volunteering and attending), team sports outperform individual sports by a significant margin.[58] Due to its popularity and large participant numbers, team sport has a unique potential to contribute fully to all four pillars within the *Canadian Sport Policy* (participation, excellence, capacity and interaction). This report has also noted how team sport contributes disproportionately to the many physical, psychological, societal and economic benefits of sport that are so well described in the literature.

This focus on team sport is not intended to diminish the importance of individual sport. As one sport leader observed: *"A robust sport system needs both team and individual sports, especially at the grass roots level, to do well internationally. We will have arrived as a country and I think represented the Canadian Sport Policy's objectives if we can demonstrate our value in a more explicit and focused way".*

There is no doubt that, with a few exceptions, Canadian sports teams fare poorly in international competition. According to one senior sport leader: *"Winning a team sport medal is a strong indicator of a well-developed sport system".* He further suggested that such a system is one that is comprehensive, coordinated and responsive, and is one that takes into account all aspects of the sport system, from grass roots in the community to the international podium.

The objective of this report was to increase our collective appreciation for team sport (as contrasted with individual sport), so that we may better understand the unique contribution team sport makes to the Canadian sport system. This report, and the briefs that accompany it, also set the stage for further investigation into how team sport is studied, funded, evaluated, and supported. We hope that the discussion created by this project will inspire the necessary refinements in the Canadian sport system to support both individual sport and team sport athletes in their pursuit of excellence.

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[57] TBloom et. al., page i.
[58] See Note 10. As shown by 2004 data, approximately 24 million adult Canadians are involved in team sports, while approximately 10 million adult Canadians are involved in individual sports.

Canada's elite athletes speak up for Team Sport

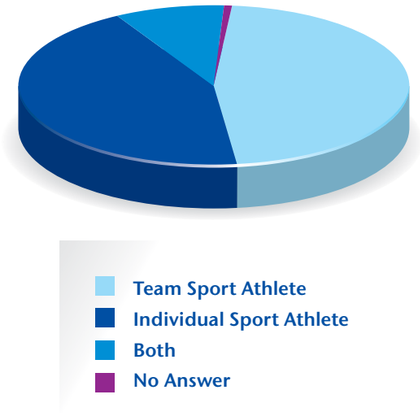
In August 2009, the research team for the Canadian Team Sports Coalition invited athletes to complete a simple online survey. This survey was one component of a larger research project focusing on the value and benefits of team sport in Canada. You will find the results of this project on the following pages.

The survey remained open for approximately three weeks and during that time 572 athletes participated: 529 of them responded to the English language survey while 43 responded to the French language survey.

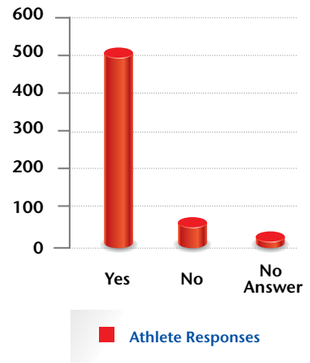
Quantitative Results of the Survey

This section summarizes the responses to the questions on the survey that were close-ended and could be tabulated numerically. There were also extensive comments offered in response to the four open-ended questions, and the next section summarizes some themes emerging from those comments.

572 Elite Canadian Athletes were surveyed:
277 identified themselves as a Team Sport athlete, 247 as an Individual Sport athlete, and 46 as both.



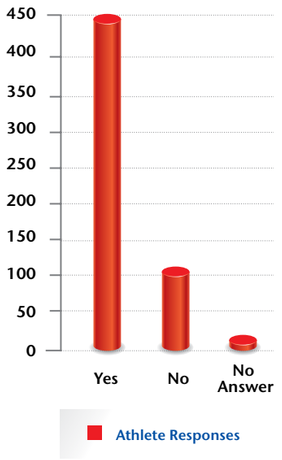
More than 240 individual and 270 team sport athletes (572 elite in total) were asked: Did you participate in team sports as a developing athlete? 88.11% responded 'Yes'



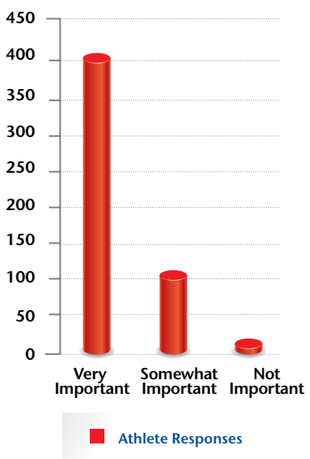
Nearly nine of ten athletes, regardless of their sport, participated in team sport as part of their athletic development.

FOOTBALL CANADA

More than 240 individual and 270 team sport athletes (572 elite in total) were asked:
Are you currently (or have you ever been) a member of a national team? 77.8% responded 'Yes'



More than 240 individual and 270 team sport athletes (572 elite in total) were asked:
How would you rate the importance of team sport participation to your development as an athlete? 406 of the athletes (71%) responded 'Very important'



Question 1: **Are you currently an:**

Active athlete	537	(93.88 percent)
Retired athlete	33	(5.77 percent)
Did not answer	2	(0.35 percent)
Total	572	(100 percent)

Question 2: **What sport(s) do you/did you participate in as an athlete?**

Individual sports	247	(43.18 percent)
Team sports	277	(48.43 percent)
Both individual & team sports	46	(8.0 percent)
Did not answer	2	(0.35 percent)
Total	572	(100 percent)

Question 3: **Are you currently a member of, or have your ever been a member of, a national team?**

Yes	445	(77.80 percent)
No	123	(21.50 percent)
Did not answer	4	(0.70 percent)
Total	572	(100 percent)

Question 4: **If you answered "yes" to question 3, for many years have you been, or were you, a member of a national team?**

1 year	128	(22.38 percent)
2 – 3 years	135	(23.60 percent)
4 – 5 years	83	(14.5 percent)
6 – 9 years	57	(9.97 percent)
10 years or more	44	(7.72 percent)
Did not answer	125	(21.85 percent)
Total	572	(100 percent)

Question 5: **Did you participate in team sports as a developing athlete?**

Yes	504	(88.11 percent)
No	62	(10.84 percent)
Did not answer	6	(1.05 percent)
Total	572	(100 percent)

Question 6: **If you answered "yes" to Question 5, which team sports did you participate in?**

The respondents identified which team sports they participated in. In most cases, athletes reported having competing in more than one team sport.

Question 7: **At what level did you participate in team sports? (check as many as apply)**

Elementary/Middle School	423	(73.95 percent)
High School	453	(79.20 percent)
College/University	248	(43.36 percent)
Club	399	(69.76 percent)
Provincial/Territorial Team	353	(61.71 percent)
Canada Games	139	(24.13 percent)
Other	118	(20.63 percent)
Did not answer	22	(3.85 percent)

Question 8: **How would you rate the importance of team sport participation to your development as an athlete? Please select one response.**

Participating in team sport was very important	406	(71.00 percent)
Participating in team sport was somewhat important	108	(18.88 percent)
Participating in team sport was not important	31	(5.42 percent)
Don't know/Not sure	10	(1.75 percent)
Did not answer	17	(2.97 percent)
Total	572	(100 percent)

Question 9: **Do you have any comments on how team sport has influenced you as an athlete?**

313 athletes provided narrative responses to this question (54.72 percent)

Question 10: **Do you have any comments on the value that team sports bring to the Canadian sport system?**

202 athletes provided narrative responses to this question (35.31 percent).

Qualitative results of the survey

The four open-ended questions in this survey asked respondents to:

- Identify their sport (Question 2)
- Identify the team sports in which they had participated as developing athletes (Question 6)
- Comment on how team sports influenced them as developing athletes (Question 9)
- Comment on the value that team sports bring to the Canadian sport system (Question 10)

With regard to Question 2, it was possible to categorize the narrative responses after the survey was completed in order to determine that approximately 48 percent of the respondents competed in team sports and 43 percent competed in individual sports. For this task, the Sport Canada definition of team sport was used.

The narrative responses given to Question 6 are perhaps less relevant than the finding that over 88 percent of respondents had participated in team sports as developing athletes. Very few respondents noted that they had participated in only one sport. The clear majority of respondents had participated in many different sports in their developmental phase.

Responses to questions 9 and 10 raised fascinating new issues. Over half of the respondents wrote about the impact of team sports on their development, and over a third offered comments on the value of team sport to the Canadian sport system.

Question 9 – The impact of team sports

This quote from a respondent summarizes much of what was said in response to Question 9:

"Team sports help foster important qualities in athletes such as teamwork, determination, cooperation and communication, that will help athletes in ALL sports, as well as throughout their lives"

Respondents made abundant references to the value of team sport in terms of:
- Personal development (developing communication skills and social skills)
- Leadership development (teaching athletes how to be a contributing member of a team, either as leader or follower)
- Values development (teaching ethics, integrity, responsibility)

There were also many references to team sport's unique ability to develop skills and competencies that are widely applicable outside of sport – namely, in personal, family, community and work life.

Question 10 – The value of team sports

This quote from a respondent summarizes much of what was said in response to Question 10:

"In my opinion, team sports are integral to the development of all athletes, and people in general. Team sports such as soccer, field hockey, and basketball provide an unparalleled platform for further athletic development by teaching a wide range of motion in simple and easy ways, and by instilling basic values in children. They are invaluable to the success of the sports system as a whole."

Respondents also referred to:
- The unifying effect of team sport on national identity and pride
- The effect of team sport on physical activity and their contribution to physical literacy in young people
- The accessibility of team sport to children and youth everywhere, and their positive effects on this demographic

One respondent asserted that: *"Team sports are the cornerstone of our sports system". Another stated: "Team sports are the essence of what we are as a country. We seek to have unity among our diverse cultures, which is exactly what team sports do."*

4. Conclusion

This simple and accessible online survey likely does not meet rigorous scientific criteria, but we believe it has still provided very useful initial findings. Notably:

- Nearly nine of ten athletes, regardless of their sport, participated in team sport as part of their athletic development

- Seven of ten athletes said that participation in team sport was very important to their athletic development. A further two out of ten acknowledged that participation in team sport was somewhat important. Only five percent of respondents said that team sport were not important in their development as athletes.

The abundant narrative responses to open-ended questions also corroborated much of what the limited existing research literature has said about the unique contributions that team sport makes to personal, social and leadership development, and about team sport's ability to hone skills that have wide applications outside of sport.

About the survey:

The survey was distributed to athletes by several means:

- The organization AthletesCAN distributed the survey to all athletes in their database
- An e-mail was sent to every NSO with a specific request that the NSO distribute the survey to their national team members
- A press release was circulated through SIRC, the Sport Information Research Centre, inviting athletes to respond
- With the assistance of Canadian Sport Centre Ontario, all Canadian Sport Centres were invited to distribute the survey through their Athlete Services personnel to athletes in their databases
- The survey was distributed by the leader of the research team to organizations and athletes with whom she had regular contact through the Centre for Sport and Law (for example, individual athlete leaders, retired athletes, and athletes accessible through organizations such as Clean Air Champions and B.C. Athletes Voice).

Sport Canada was contacted to assist with the distribution of the survey to athletes receiving AAP financial assistance. However, Sport Canada was unable to assist due to timing conflicts with the delivery of another internal athlete survey.

The purpose of the survey was to determine athlete respondents' involvement in team sport and to obtain their perspectives on the benefits (if any) of team sport to their personal athletic development. Athletes were also asked about their opinions on the value of team sport to the Canadian sport system.

The survey was purposely designed to be simple, quick and easy to complete. It was not designed for empirical purposes but rather to obtain a general snapshot of athlete perspectives on team sport.

WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

Appendix 1

The Research Team:

Dina Bell-Laroche, of the Centre for Sport and Law, has worked in sport for two decades in varying capacities with the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the True Sport Foundation and numerous national sport organizations. Dina's educational background includes a degree in journalism, and she is currently completing a Masters degree in sport management at Brock University, where she is researching how organizational practices grounded in shared values can improve organizational culture and organizational effectiveness.

Rachel Corbett, of the Centre for Sport and Law, helps organizations manage change by providing consulting services in research, planning, governance, policy development and risk management. A co-founder of the Centre, Rachel has a Masters degree in Environmental Design (Planning), has lectured in several subjects at Brock University and writes and publishes widely in the sport field.

Kevin Lawrie is a sport management graduate from Brock University and has a Masters Degree in physical education. His research thesis investigated communication in the coach-athlete relationship in team sport settings. Kevin has also completed a Bachelor of Education degree from University of Toronto. He is presently engaged in a number of consulting projects that relate to his combined degrees in sport and education.

Robin Witty is a sport administrator providing administrative, marketing and communications support to a number of sport organizations including the Centre for Sport and Law, the Canadian Sport Centre Ontario, and the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association.

Appendix 2

Sport leaders interviewed for this project:

Caroline Assalian
Alex Baumann
Janet Beverley
Wendy Gittens
Colin Higgs
Sue Hylland
Joel MacDonald
Glen McCurdie
Marg McGregor
Jan Meyer
David Miringuay
Peter Montopoli
Debbie Muir
Suzzanne Nicholson
Wayne Parrish
Rick Traer
Richard Way

CANADIAN LACROSSE ASSOCIATION

In terms of people engagement – through participating, volunteering and attending – teams sports outperform individual sports by a significant margin.

CANADA VOLLEYBALL