“Huddle-Up” # 1 - Character

What to do…

Huddle the players together and review the CHAMPS acronym. Introduce today’s huddle-up and read the definition and quotes. Then, read or narrate the sport story below. Close with the application questions. Feel free to be innovative or make age appropriate adjustments.

Objectives:
- Players will learn a basic definition of character.
- Players will hear a real sports story of a life champion who demonstrated character.
- Players will consider how their character impacts others.

Preparation for Coaches:
- Read over lesson 1 beforehand.
- Be prepared to read or retell (in your own words) the story below of golfer J. P. Hayes. Be sure each of your players are making eye contact with you as you tell the story, giving you their eyes and their ears!

Character is…

Definition - The quality of being consistently honest, moral, and dependable regardless of the circumstances or benefits.

Words related to Character - Integrity, Virtue, Honor, Honesty, Consistency.

Cool Quips on Character…

“Sports do not build character; they reveal it.”
— John Wooden, UCLA Basketball Coach (1910-2010)

“The measure of a man's character is what he would do if he knew he never would be found out.”
— Thomas Macauley, English historian and statesman (1800-1859)
Character Champion

Life Champion: Professional Golfer J. P. Hayes

For professional golfer J. P. Hayes, character is more important than fame or money. J. P. showed his character when he turned himself in for a rule violation which cost him a likely spot on the PGA Tour for the 2009 season. J. P. had accidentally used an illegal golf ball for two of his shots during the qualifying tournament. Not two rounds of golf or even two holes of golf. Only two shots! And nobody even knew that J. P. had used an illegal ball. J. P., himself, hadn’t noticed until after he had finished playing. His score was safely in the books and a spot on the PGA Tour likely secured. No one would ever have known if he had kept quiet. Should he have kept quiet? Besides, it wasn’t really his fault: his caddy was supposed to keep track of the golf balls anyway. But for J. P. Hayes character matters. So, despite the fact that he wasn’t to blame and despite the fact that he would lose a likely spot on the PGA Tour and tens of thousands of dollars, J. P. decided to turn himself in. He chose character in spite of the consequences.

When asked why he made that decision, J. P. replied: “No one would have known, but I knew. And I’ve got some people looking down on me that would have known and that’s important to me.” In a twist of fate, J. P.’s decision actually brought him more fame. In the weeks that followed, J. P.’s story filled newspapers and sport shows across the country. People were amazed by his honesty and integrity. Mike Golic of ESPN said, “this is a great story for sports and for honesty in sports.” The goal of character is never fame but when witnessed by others it always inspires.

Although we cannot control the athletic talent we are born with or, at times, even our performance, we can always maintain our character. And though our athletic talents will eventually diminish and fame will fade, our character will always remain with us.

Live it Out!!!

- It has been said “it isn’t cheating if you aren’t caught.” Is this true?
- Would you rather be known as a gifted athlete or a person of character?
- How can compromising your character impact your teammates?

Sources:

• The Macauley quote is from the Josephson Institute. Online: http://josephsoninstitute.org/quotes/character.html. The Wooden quote was originally stated by sport journalist Heywood Broun (1918-2001), but appears to have been repeated by Wooden (see Fred R. Shapiro, The Yale Book of Quotations [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2006], 107).
“Huddle-Up” # 2 - Heart of a Champion

What to do...

Huddle the players together and review the CHAMPS acronym. Introduce today’s huddle-up and read the definition and quotes. Then, read or narrate the sports story below. Close with the application questions. Feel free to be innovative or make age appropriate adjustments.

Objectives:
- Players will learn what it means to have the heart of a champion.
- Players will hear a real sports story of a life champion who demonstrated courage.
- Players will consider how they can be courageous for their team this year.

Preparation for Coaches:
- Read over lesson 2 beforehand.
- Be prepared to read or retell (in your own words) the story below of football hero Emmitt Smith. Make sure that each of your players are making eye contact with you as you tell the story, giving you their eyes and their ears!

A Person with the Heart of a Champion is...

One who goes beyond the call of duty for the sake of others. One who performs with courage in the face of fear or pain for the good of the team.

Words which describe a champion: courageous, dependable, brave, heroic.

Cool Quips...

“Ask not what your teammates can do for you, ask what can you do for your teammates.”
— Magic Johnson, Former NBA Basketball Player

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear.”
— Mark Twain, American Writer (1835-1910)
An Athlete with the Heart of a Champion…

Life Champion: Professional Football Player Emmitt Smith (the NFL’s all-time leading rusher) For the 1993 NFL season the Dallas Cowboys won the Super Bowl beating the Buffalo Bills 30-13. If you were to ask famous Cowboy players like Troy Aikman and Michael Irvin what sparked their championship run, they would tell you about Emmitt Smith’s heroic performance a few games earlier. In the final game of the regular season, the Cowboys were playing the New York Giants. The winner of that game would receive home field advantage for the playoffs and the much coveted bye week the following Sunday. Early in the game Emmitt, the Cowboys running back, suffered a first-degree separation of his right shoulder. After consulting with the training staff, Emmitt was cleared to play and was told that it was just a matter of how much pain he could endure. Emmitt had a choice: either sit out the rest of the game on the sidelines or continue to play despite extreme discomfort. Emmitt didn’t have to think twice. He knew the importance of this game. He knew his teammates needed him. So he courageously endured the pain for the benefit of the team. Even the other Cowboy players tried to convince him otherwise telling him, “you don’t have to do this!” At one point the head coach sent in Lincoln Coleman to replace Emmitt. Emmitt told the backup running back to head back to the sidelines. Emmitt wasn’t coming out of the game.

Live it Out!!!

Have you ever experienced fear at school or before a big game? Have you ever wanted to give up? What does it mean to be courageous in these circumstances? How could you sacrifice for your teammates this year?

Sources:
“Huddle-Up” # 3 - Attitude

What to do…

Huddle the players together and review the CHAMPS acronym. Introduce today’s “Huddle-Up” and read the definition and quotes. Then, read or narrate the sports story below. Close with the application questions. Feel free to be innovative or to make age appropriate adjustments.

Objectives:
- Players will learn what it means to have the attitude of a champion.
- Players will hear a real sports story of a life champion whose positive attitude allowed him to pursue his dreams despite setbacks and limitations.
- Players will consider how they can always choose to have a positive attitude despite challenging circumstances.

Preparation for Coaches:
- Read over lesson 3 beforehand.
- Be prepared to read or retell (in your own words) the story of the below college football hero Rudy Ruettiger. Make sure that each player is making eye contact with you as you tell the story, giving you their eyes and their ears!

The Attitude of a Champion is…

Choosing to have a positive perspective and no-quit spirit regardless of your circumstances.

Words related to attitude: persistence, positive outlook, long-term perspective.

Cool Quips…

“Ability is what you’re capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.”
— Lou Holtz, Former Head Football Coach of Notre Dame

“Attitude affects everything- and you get to chose it.”
— Steve Snider, Founder of Life CHAMPS Sports
An Athlete with the Right Attitude…

Life Champion: College Football Player Rudy Ruettiger.

Rudy Ruettiger had a dream: to attend school at and play football for the University of Notre Dame. However, there was a problem. Notre Dame was an elite institution both academically and athletically. And Rudy didn’t excel in the classroom or on the sports field. He was only 5’6 and weighed 165 lbs—not the ideal size for a college football player! Additionally, Rudy had a learning disability called dyslexia which made school a challenge for him. So, although his chances of attending Notre Dame were slim and despite the fact that everybody told him that he couldn’t do it, Rudy set out to attend Notre Dame and to play football for the Fighting Irish.

Along the way, Rudy experienced many setbacks. He was actually rejected three times before finally being admitted to Notre Dame in 1974. Following his admission, he asked to try out for the Irish football team. After being laughed at, he was allowed to put on some pads and show what he could do. Even though they knew he would never actually play. The coaches were blown away by his effort and passion and positive, no-quit attitude. They invited him to be on the practice squad and basically be a blocking dummy. In those days, walk-on players like Rudy usually weren’t allowed to join the scholarship players on the sidelines during real games. They had to watch from the stands like everyone else. Yet, Rudy wanted to do more than just practice with the team. In fact, he hoped to join the team on the sidelines for a real game at least once so he could prove to the world that he had reached his dream.

Against all odds, Rudy learned two days before the final game of his career that his dream would come true. On November 8, 1975, Rudy dressed for Notre Dame’s game against Georgia Tech. Nobody could have guessed what happened next. In the final minutes of the game, Notre Dame had a comfortable lead over Georgia Tech and the coaches put Rudy in the game. He even helped sack the Georgia Tech quarterback on the final play of the game!!

Rudy exhibited a positive attitude despite setbacks and discouragement. He practiced every day like it was a real game. He chose persistence and kept a never-quit attitude despite the circumstances. He had the attitude of a champion.

Live it Out!!!

What would happen if every player on your team had the same attitude as Rudy? Why is it important to give your best effort at every practice just like Rudy? What kind of attitude do you have when you experience discouragement or setbacks in your life?

Sources:
All information on Rudy was gathered from articles and videos from his official website: http://www.rudyinternational.com/.
“Huddle-Up” # 4 - Mentors

What to do…

Huddle the players together and review the CHAMPS acronym. Introduce today’s “huddle-up” and read the definition and quotes. Then, read or narrate the sports story below. Close with the application questions. Feel free to be innovative or to make age appropriate adjustments.

Objectives:
- Players will learn the importance of having mentors.
- Players will hear a real sports story of a life champion who was impacted by a mentor.
- Players will consider how they can be role models for others.

Preparation for Coaches:
- Read over lesson 4 beforehand.
- Be prepared to read or retell (in your own words) the story below of track and field athlete Jesse Owens. Make sure that each player is making eye contact with you as you tell the story, giving you their eyes and their ears!

A Mentor is…

Definition - a respected, trusted individual who can act as a guide and role model.

Words related to Mentor – Guide, Leader, Coach, Counselor

Cool Quips…

“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.”

“Coaching is a profession of love. You can’t coach people unless you love them.”
- Eddie Robinson, former football coach at Grambling State University (1919–2007)
The Importance of Having a Mentor...

Life Champion: Track and Field Athlete, Jesse Owens (1913–1980)

When asked about his victories on the racetrack, Jesse Owens would always give credit to the man who served as his long-time coach, mentor, and friend, Charles Riley. Charles was the PE teacher at Fairmount Junior High in Cleveland and the first time he saw Jesse Owens run he knew that the teenager had huge potential. All Jesse needed was a good coach.

Jesse had grown up in rural Alabama before moving to Cleveland and he had never had another adult take an interest in his well-being other than his parents. So, Jesse was surprised when Charles said that he wanted to personally train him. Jesse agreed and became Charles’s dedicated pupil. Though he was naturally athletic, Jesse’s running form needed adjustment. Charles helped Jesse to not only run fast but also to run with the proper technique. Jesse was pushed to his limits by Charles’s rigorous training. Despite the difficulty, Jesse understood that there was a purpose behind all the demanding aspects of Charles’s coaching. Soon, Charles Riley became more than a mere coach for Jesse; he became like a second father. Charles wanted to develop Jesse not only as an athlete but also as a person and Charles would often invite Jesse to eat dinner with his family and even spent time with him on the weekends.

Owens became one of the best runners of his time. In the 1936 Olympics, Jesse won 4 gold medals and set or equaled records for the 100 meters, 200 meters, the long jump, and the 4x100 relay. Jeremy Schaap described Jesse’s feats at those Olympics as “the most significant individual performance ever in sports.”

None of Jesse’s amazing accomplishments would have been possible if a man had not believed in him when he was a young teenager in need of guidance. And Jesse’s development would have been hindered if his pride had made him un-teachable. Natural ability in any area can only bring an individual so far. Eventually, everyone needs the positive influence of a mentor both on the playing field and in life.

Live it Out!!

(1) Is there a person in your life whom you admire as a role model in sports? What about as a role model for life? What is it you can learn from this person?

(2) As important as a good mentor is, there is no mentor who can help someone who is too proud to learn. How do you respond when someone tries to teach you?

(3) Can you be a role model to others? Are there people in your life who look up to you?

Sources:
“Huddle-Up” # 5-Purpose

What to do…

Huddle the players together and review the CHAMPS acronym. Introduce today’s “huddle-up” and read the definition and quotes. Then, read or narrate the sports story below. Close with the application questions. Feel free to be innovative or to make age appropriate adjustments.

Objectives:
- Players will learn what it means to live with purpose.
- Players will hear a real sports story of a life champion whose purpose goes beyond sports.
- Players will consider their own purpose in life.

Preparation for Coaches:
- Read over lesson 5 beforehand.
- Be prepared to read or retell (in your own words) the story below of football hero Tim Tebow.
  Make sure that each of your players are making eye contact with you as you tell the story, giving you their eyes and their ears!

The Purpose of a Champion is…

To live life for something bigger than just yourself, to be a positive difference-maker for others.

Words related to purpose: motivation, conviction, perspective.

Cool Quips on Purpose…

“One thing I’ve learned in 22 years of coaching is that you cannot separate the player from the person. Everything a player does off the field will eventually come back around to affecting him on the field.”
— Steve Roberts, Head Football Coach at Arkansas State University

“The secret of man’s being is not only to live but to have something to live for.”
— Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian Author (1821–1888)
A Champion Who Lives with Purpose...

Life Champion: Football Player Tim Tebow

Tim Tebow has achieved great success on the football field. While he was the quarterback at the University of Florida, Tim won the Heisman Trophy and led the Gators to a national championship during the 2007 season. He has been called by some as the “greatest college football player ever.” However, Tim is motivated by a greater purpose than just success on the football field. To put it in Tim’s words: “my priorities in life are #1 my faith in God, #2 my family and my relationship with my family, #3 academics, and #4 football.”

Given Tim’s priorities it isn’t surprising that regardless of whether he’s winning or losing on the sports field, he lets his faith direct his actions and attitude. Before every game he writes the words “Phil 4:13” on his eye-black patches. This is a Bible verse which reads, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” For Tim, this verse is more than just something cool to write on his eye-blacks; it is a guide for life. Those who have coached and played beside Tim can attest firsthand to his dedication to his faith. Even Tim’s coach at Florida, Urban Meyer, admitted to being a little skeptical at first, “I was like okay, come on… give me the real gig here… What’s the deal?” But after spending four years coaching Tebow, Meyer concluded “it’s true. It’s all from his heart. I love that guy. I’ve never met one like him.”

In 2010, Tim started the “Tim Tebow Foundation” which helps bring faith, hope, and love to people in their time of need. Tim’s foundation does work all over the world from raising money for education, to taking underprivileged kids on a trip to Disney World, to even helping orphans in the Philippines. There is more to Tim Tebow than just football. He lives life for a purpose bigger than just himself. By doing so, he has inspired and helped people all over the globe.

Live it Out!!!

(1) What is your purpose in life?
(2) Do your actions and attitude line up with that purpose?
(3) How would you rank your priorities (faith, family, school, sports)?

Sources:
The quote from Steve Roberts is from the back cover of Josh Steed, Faith and Football: A Look at Life through a Facemask (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2009). The quote from Doestoevsky is from The Brothers Karamzov.
“Huddle-Up” # 6-Serving Others

What to do…

Huddle the players together and review the CHAMPS acronym. Introduce today’s “huddle-up” and read the definition and quotes. Then, read or narrate the sports story below. Close with the application questions. Feel free to be innovative or to make age appropriate adjustments.

Objectives:
- Players will learn what it means to serve others.
- Players will hear a real sports story of a life champion who demonstrated this quality.
- Players will consider how their service impacts others

Preparation for Coaches:
- Read over huddle-up #6 beforehand.
- Be prepared to read or retell (in your own words) the story below of MLB All-Star Albert Pujols (pronounced: POO-holes). Make sure that each of your players are making eye contact with you as you tell the story, giving you their eyes and their ears!

Serving Others is…

Assisting another person who is in need; seeking to help others before helping yourself.

Words related to Service – Selfless, Humble, Courteous, Servant

Cool Quips on Service…

“You have not lived a perfect day, unless you have done something for someone who will never be able to repay you.”
   - Ruth Smeltzer, Writer

"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace."
   - Martin Luther King, Jr., Civil Rights Activist (1929–1968)
Blessed to Serve Others
Life Champion: Albert Pujols, St. Louis Cardinals

Albert Pujols (pronounced POO-holes) is one of the greatest baseball players to ever play the game. In August of 2010, he became one of the youngest players ever to hit 400 home runs. His list of accomplishments stretches farther than even his bat blasts, yet he is quick to acknowledge that his success in baseball is a blessing, a blessing from above through which he can be used as a tool to serve others in need. Albert says: “people sometimes ask me, ‘What is your job?’ Everybody thinks that it’s playing baseball, but that’s not my job; that’s the platform God has given me.” Because of his beliefs, Albert started the Pujols Family Foundation; this foundation exists to help children in the U.S. who have Down’s syndrome and to improve the lives of people in the Dominican Republic, his home country. He believes it is his God-given duty to love and serve others sacrificially, both at home and abroad. Yet, Albert believes service is not the only goal of his foundation; he says that the main goal is not reaching people “through writing a check” but “with the good news of Jesus Christ.” Albert’s faith is the most important aspect of his life and it guides everything from how he interacts with his teammates to the way he runs his foundation.

Albert’s baseball skills have often been acknowledged with awards. In 2008, however, Major League Baseball also acknowledged Albert’s service off the field, awarding him with the Roberto Clemente Award, the highest honor a MLB player can receive for acts of service in the community. Albert knows that there are unmet needs around the world, and he cherishes his opportunity to make an impact through service.

You don’t have to be a professional baseball player to serve others. It doesn’t take any special ability or talent. All it takes is a desire to make a difference and a loving and gracious heart. And just like Albert knows, you can be certain that your impact from serving others will far outweigh and outlast any contribution made on the athletic field.

Live it Out!!!

(1) What are some everyday things you often take for granted which many other less-fortunate kids do not have?
(2) In light of all your blessings, what are some ways you can give back and help others?
(3) The last line of the story above states: “You can be certain your impact from serving others will far outweigh and outlast any contribution made on the athletic field.” Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?

Sources:
“Huddle-Up” # 7 - “Champion for Life”

What to do…

Huddle the players together for their last “Huddle-Up” lesson. Even if you haven’t covered all the lessons in the previous weeks, this is a great chance to not only review the CHAMPS acronym, but also to celebrate the season with your players. Feel free to be innovative or to make age appropriate adjustments to the lesson below.

Objectives:
- Players will review the CHAMPS acronym.
- Players will learn about being a “Champion for Life.”
- Players will celebrate what they have accomplished over the season.

Celebrate your season together as a team!

Coaches, make sure and take a minute to tell the players how much you appreciate them. Celebrate their hard work, dedication to practice, or even their improvement over the season. Share how much you’ve enjoyed getting to know them better. Have you seen them display any of the CHAMPS traits? Tell them about it!

Be a “Champion for Life”…

A champion for life is someone who takes ALL that God has given them and lives with integrity in order to positively impact others. The first step in becoming a champion for life is recognizing that you are unique with your own God-given talents and abilities. Do not wish for other peoples’ talents, instead appreciate what God has given you. Peyton Manning cannot be Michael Vick. If he tried to run the ball like Vick, he wouldn’t be near the quarterback as he is doing what he does well-sit in the pocket and pick defenses apart. The second step in becoming a champion for life is to live with integrity. True integrity is living life with character and heart while having the right attitude. Finally, becoming a champion for life means living with purpose by serving others. God put you on this earth to do more than just play ball but to make a difference by being a bright light and serving others. The greatest champion of all said that the path to true greatness is through serving others.
A look at some Heroes who are great examples of being a “Champion for Life”…

**Character**  Character is revealed by what you do when nobody is looking. A person with good character is consistent, honest, and dependable. Do you remember the story of professional golfer J. P. Hays? J. P. showed his character during the 2009 season. He showed good character when he turned himself in for a minor ball violation costing himself a guaranteed spot on the PGA Tour. Even though no one would have ever known that he had used the wrong ball, J. P. chose honesty over victory.

**Heart of a Champion**  Having the heart of a champion is the courage to strive hard in the face of fear and adversity. Emmitt Smith had the heart of a champion when he played against the New York Giants in the final game of the 1992 season. Despite the excruciating pain of a dislocated shoulder, Emmitt not only continued playing but was the key player in that Dallas Cowboy’s victory. Emmitt performed with heart in spite of the pain and adversity for the sake of his teammates.

**Attitude**  Our attitude is something we get to choose despite our circumstances. A good attitude refuses to give into discouragement in the face of setbacks. You may remember the story of Rudy. He not only wanted to graduate from Notre Dame, but he also hoped to play football for the Fighting Irish. Although people told him it was impossible and he even failed at first, Rudy eventually accomplished both of his goals. Rudy’s positive attitude shaped his spirit of never quitting.

**Mentoring**  A mentor is a respected, trusted and experienced individual who can help guide you through life. The story of track athlete Jesse Owens and his coach Charles Riley illustrated the importance of having good mentors. Charles believed in Jesse and devoted his time to developing him as a sprinter; Jesse was humble enough to learn from Charles and trusted his coach’s guidance. Make sure to pick trustworthy mentors who are champions not only on the field but also in life!

**Purpose**  God put each one of us here for a purpose bigger than ourselves. Your purpose in life is the reason for your actions, whether playing football, going to school, or just living life. Tim Tebow clearly lives with purpose. Tim’s Christian faith is his top priority and it guides his attitude and actions. Tim always kept faith #1, his family #2, school #3, and football #4.

**Serving Others**  St. Louis Cardinal Albert Pujols is amazing in his focus on serving others. He is taking the initiative to help others in their time of need. Albert believes that we have all been blessed so that we can be a blessing to other people. How has God blessed you? What gifts or talents do you have? Though we may serve others in different ways than Albert, we can always be a blessing to others by serving their needs.

**Live it Out!!!**

- Which CHAMPS trait is easiest for you to practice? Is there one you need to work on?

CHALLENGE: Choose 3 of the Life CHAMPS character values above to work on in your own life and become a greater “Champion for Life” who makes a big difference in our world.