



Sports Don't Have to Stop

By Devin Healy

Sports in My Life

Since I was young, I've always played a sport. That is, if you consider trying to shoot a full-sized basketball into a 10ft basket at two years old. I've played AAU basketball, baseball, flag football, soccer, and golf. I loved sports and knew I wanted to continue playing them through high school. And I did this by playing basketball my sophomore and junior year. During these times, though, I felt myself questioning this love. Have you ever had a coach you felt you just couldn't please? One that worked you 'til you dropped but still didn't acknowledge you? Yeah, those were my coaches. I also had some pretty bad injuries. Tough situation. But I knew I still loved sports. And when I arrived at Loyola on my first day, seeing all the opportunities to continue my love of sports was awesome.

Coming to Loyola was a culture shock because I had to meet a lot of people. The problem is, I HATED the conventional method of meeting people in the first few weeks of college. Every hour for the first few days involved the same three questions: What year are you, what's your major, and where are you from? I hardly got to know people, for the simple reason that most of those conversations ended with those three questions. I needed common ground. And what better common ground than sports? I wasn't medically cleared to compete in intramural basketball, but there was no way I was gonna let that stop me. Every day I went to the FAC and ran basketball scrimmages with random students (please don't tell my doctor). Guys I had never met before became good friends simply because of the love we shared over sports. Shortly, I was cleared for sports activity, and jumped at the opportunity to join any league. This started with intramural football and softball. Since joining, I have loved every second of it. Meeting so many new people through intramural sports who share common interests was such a relief (and A LOT less boring). [Intramural sports](#) continue to be one of the best ways to make friends and build community.

The Losing

Losing sucks. After winning my first softball game (by a lot, not to brag), we had two more games afterwards. Unfortunately, we lost those games (by a lot, I'll stop bragging). You could cut the demoralization in the air with a knife. No matter what we did, every pitch was a hit. On the flip side, we couldn't hit any pitch at all. And this was a long tournament, a couple of hours, so it was not over quickly. You feel like you've taken so much time out of your day to play a sport, and once you finally get to play, you lose. I'd hate to turn this into a lecture, but losing has its advantages, especially when trying to make new friends and connections.



Firstly, losing can bond people. Sounds weird, right? You'd figure a team losing 20 to 9 would be at each other's throats, tossing blame all over the place. This simply wasn't the case. There's not some coach yelling in your ear, or the fear of how they might react if you make a bad play. Ryan Butts, a current freshman at Loyola who has joined multiple intramural leagues, speaks on the bonds created by losing. He says how "losing in sports can create a strong bond between teammates because people grow through adversity" (Butts). Continuing with this theme of adversity, and not to sound like your

mom, losing offers a lesson.

Losing is a “natural part of life, and encountering setbacks on the field can serve as a powerful lesson in resilience” ([Masters](#)). If you and your group of buddies can make it through a loss gracefully (I know, it can be tough, but I believe in you), you might even see it translate to real-life, like in college. Say for example you and your friend, who's on an intramural team of yours, have to complete a project. With every project comes setbacks. Having dealt with a setback in a sports setting with this friend, you might find yourself more adept at solving this problem. And it's for a simple reason: you know you can do it. You have seen yourself and your friends get through a loss/setback and know it's possible to get out of it. Unless, of course, its procrastinating until 2am, in which case, you're on your own.

Losing also makes you better friends with those you lost with. Going back to what I said about finding common ground, you and your friends now have a common ground. In my case, it turned into sort of an inside joke. Something we could poke fun at each other about, but also something we knew we could improve at. And I can promise you, nobody on the team liked getting blown out 20 to 9, so it encouraged us to continue playing and to continue getting better. Ben Carroll, a freshman here at Loyola who is heavily involved in intramural sports and is one of the leaders of the water polo club, details his experience with losing. In response to how losing can create stronger bonds between teammates, Carroll states how “losing makes people want to go to practice and to grow as a team.” And while the importance of winning and losing with an intramural sports team might not be as high as a competitive school team, losing still encourages you to “support one another,” by “[working] collaboratively towards a shared goal, laying the groundwork for a strong team cohesion both on and off the field” ([Masters](#)). Losing has an effect on relationships off the field, as it allows us to come together as a group, get better, have a good time, and make new connections (I would still rather not lose 20 to 9, but I'll live).

The Winning

Here we go. Now this is what we all love. To win. So far, we've done more winning on my flag football intramural team. And let me tell you, it feels great. Our first game was super nerve-racking. The rules were a bit unclear, we were facing a team full of juniors, and really didn't know what to expect. Once we got onto the field and got the game going, however, we knew we had a chance. We won 26 to 19 (much better than losing 20 to 9) and rushed the field like we had won the Superbowl. Winning as a team has clear advantages as well and is a lot more fun to talk about.

Firstly, winning can encourage people to simply show up. After you win a game and see it's possible, you'll want to continue to recreate the win. The only way to do that is to show up. And show up



we did. We started taking this whole flag football thing very seriously. I was drawing up plays, people were scheduling times to practice, and most importantly, people were hanging out with each other outside of the games and practices. Professor Sean Keehan, an economics professor here at Loyola with a long background in sports, points out the effect winning can have on the team. He says how winning "... can also form a stronger bond if those teammates desire to keep winning and they strive to work harder in order to have a better chance at future winning experiences" (Keehan). Similarly to competitive school sports, we would eat as a team after every game and practice. This promoted connection between teammates and translated onto the field. We had more chemistry. Encouraged by winning, but not limited to it of course, "joining an Intramural team [opens] the door to [have] opportunities every week to make memories in a fun and competitive environment" (Bandara). Celebrating the win allows connections to be made since winning is a collective goal. Working towards, and achieving, a collective goal creates a sense of accomplishment, which is shared equally with the team.

Taking a Breather

Intramural sports work their best magic when they act like a stress reliever. Speaking from experience, college can (and will) be very mentally exhausting. The mountain of work which can pile up over time can get to be a lot, and it's not always easy to find a healthy outlet. Sports can be just that. Brianna Puschendorf, a sophomore here at Loyola who's an Evergreen and is involved with dancing, speaks on the importance of college students remaining active through the college workload. She says how "keeping your body active feels like a release of all unnecessary or unwanted feelings or thoughts. It's so healthy not only for your body but also for your mind. It's also just important to keep up with those hobbies because it's easy to get caught up academically that you forget to do the things you enjoy too" (Puschendorf). Intramural sports can take up more time in your week. While you might be thinking you need all the time you can get, I promise with solid time management, "you can still get your work hours in AND relieve a little stress in the same night" (Bandara). Yes, this means procrastinating your work three hours before its due, then attempting to do an activity, will not work (I know from experience). This, too, has its benefits, promoting time management skills.

It Takes a Single Step

Coming into your freshman year, there will be hundreds of new names, faces, and experiences. And since you're already out of your comfort zone, joining any club or intramural sport can be extremely difficult. Believe me, I'd know. I didn't immediately begin putting myself out there and meeting new people. I get it, watching Netflix is great, but continuing to do what you love is more important. And intramural sports are one of the many incredible ways you can put yourself out there by doing what you love at Loyola. Surrounding yourself with like-minded people who share common interests, goals, and passions is one of the best ways to get yourself out of your shell. Intramural sports can build relationships, offer lessons, and refine life skills (like avoiding the dreaded procrastination). All it takes is a single step.

