

# OVERPLAYED

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SANITY IN THE WORLD OF YOUTH SPORTS

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**Study Guide by Jamie Calloway-Hanauer**

**Note to leaders:** This study guide is designed to be used during an eight-week period, but you can organize reading and discussion to take place over a longer or shorter time frame. Author Dave King is available as a resource to your group. If you'd like to connect to him for correspondence or discussion or to invite him to speak to your group, send an email to [overplayed.king@gmail.com](mailto:overplayed.king@gmail.com).

## WEEK ONE

### Introduction: Why This Book?

### Myth One: Because We Owe Our Children Every Opportunity, We Can't Say No to Youth Sports

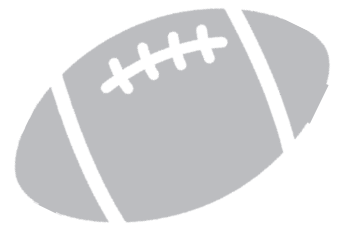


1. Why is a book on this subject of youth sports even necessary?
2. Margot and Dave suggest that people who follow Christ are equipped with particular resources in terms of making decisions that differ from the pattern of the world (see “What Does Faith Have to Do with Youth Sports?” section in Introduction). What role does your faith currently play in your children’s and/or family’s participation in youth sports? What role should it play, if at all?
3. Margot and Dave have described the significant social pressure that exists to play youth sports (messages include: Specialize early. Develop skills. Condition. Find the right travel team). If you have a child or grandchild involved in youth sports, what pressures do you experience? Where, or from whom, do those pressures originate?
4. In what practical ways might you counter or cope with those social pressures? How can you help your children do the same?
5. Reflect on the “Questions to Ask Ourselves” in “The Big Picture” section of the Myth One chapter. What answers come to mind regarding your attitude and role in your child’s activities and schedule?
6. What amount of *time* per week seems appropriate for you and your family to expend on youth sports? What amount of *money* spent on youth sports seems wise considering your family budget? Write down your answers so you can refer back to them as you move through the athletic season(s). Consider taping your answers to the inside of a cabinet or on the refrigerator as a reminder; you could take a picture with your phone as a way to keep your list with you. Or write the answers on a blank page in your book.
7. Dave and Margot use the word *delight* to refer to a child’s relationship with and feeling toward a particular sport (see “Do I Owe It” section of the Myth One chapter). Is there a difference between a child enjoying a sport and delighting in it? If so, would your child’s *delight* in participation change your answer to question number three above?
8. Reread the limits described in the “Set Limits Early” section of the Myth One chapter. Take time to write down your answers and, if applicable, compare your answer to your spouse’s answers. Are you in agreement with one another? If not, consider setting up a time to talk about any differences that may exist. What particular challenges do single parents face when navigating youth sports?

## WEEK TWO

### Myth Two: My Child Deserves to play with the Most-Skilled Athletes

1. What do the words *deserve* and *owe* mean to you? With those definitions in mind, do you feel you “owe” it to your children to enroll them in youth sports? Is participation something they inherently “deserve?”
2. What is your child’s attitude toward sports?
3. Margot and Dave describe two youth, Jay and Katrina, and their individual experiences with athletics (“When to Play with the Best” section). Jay and Katrina’s parents recognized the need to conform athletic pursuits to each youth’s personality. What is your child’s personality type? Where might he or she fit best—if at all—in athletics?
4. Have you asked your child why he or she wants to play a particular sport? If not, ask. Ask yourself the same question: Why do *I* want my child to play a particular sport? Write down the answers for further reflection as you consider whether your child should sign up to play. (Use one of the strategies listed in question #6 in Myth One to keep your answers with you.)



## WEEK THREE

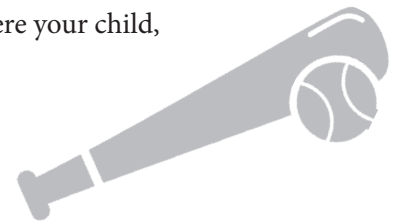
### Myth Three: My Child Should Specialize in One Sport

1. How does the myth of specialization manifest in your community? Have you ever felt pressured by it?
2. Discuss the problems that the authors identify with early specialization in one sport. Are there other problems that you would identify with this type of specialization?
3. Consider the benefits that Margot and Dave suggest exists when young athletes *don't* specialize in one sport. Which of these benefits have you observed in children who don't specialize in one sport at early ages?
4. If your child already plays sports, in what ways is he or she benefiting from involvement? Do the benefits meet your expectations? Your child's expectations?
5. What's your reaction to Margot's description of herself as “lazy, cheap, and sensible”? Do you view her as a slacker mom or as someone who has her priorities straight?
6. In this chapter and others, Dave and Margot discuss the difference between being driven by fear and by love. Think of a time that you, or someone you know, was motivated by fear with regard to decisions about youth sports. What was at the center of the fear? How can parents begin to make decisions out of love rather than fear when it comes to youth sports?

## WEEK FOUR

### Myth Four: There's No Harm in Participating in Youth Sports

1. Have you ever asked yourself, in terms of your child's involvement in athletics, "What's the harm?"? When you consider that question, what first comes to mind?
2. It's easy to assume that your child will be "different"—that he or she won't experience undue pressure, drop out, burn out, or be stretched thin by competing obligations. Do you find yourself thinking—or being tempted to think—along these lines? What are ways you can keep a realistic perspective about your child's sports commitments?
3. What are some ways you can help your child make sense of the gauntlet of "adultification" of youth sports? (Find examples of this in "When Kids Aren't Free to Be Kids" section.)
4. Dave and Margot explore the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic values. If your child plays sports, how might you keep extrinsic values from inhibiting growth of intrinsic values? How are you being proactive to reinforce the intrinsic motivators you value?
5. Reread the story about Derek ("Reading a Child's Cues" section). If Derek were your child, how might you create a safe space for him to talk about his fear of failure?



## WEEK FIVE

### Myth Five: Youth Sports Instill Our Family's Values

1. In what way(s) do you currently communicate your values to your child? How might that change with a rigorous practice and game schedule? Where and how can you keep negative changes from happening?
2. Sports league participation is often determined by geographic boundaries. If your league's community is fairly racially and economically homogenous, is that problematic, from your perspective? If it is, how might you help your child get to know people who are different from them?
3. In what way can sports be used as a starting point to talking to children about economic disparity, diversity, and service to others?
4. Think back to Margot's description of her daughter, Zoe, growing more on the bench than on the court ("Self-Awareness" section). Have you witnessed your child grow from participating in sports in ways other than athletic? If so, take the time to praise your child for this growth.
5. Margot and Dave state that kids can learn about God, themselves, and others through sports. How does this happen? Do you have particular instances in mind?
6. How can parents learn about God through their own athletic involvements and those of their children? How can parents learn about others and about themselves as well?

## WEEK SIX

### **Myth Six: Good Parents Attend All Their Children's Games**



1. Has your child ever told you if he or she wants you at games and/or practices? Have you ever asked? Can you remember a time you thought negatively about a parent who didn't attend a game? Did you share that thought with others?
2. Make a list of five things you could do during a game or practice (errands, coffee with a friend, etc.). Would doing any of these things reduce your stress? Give you more family time?
3. When you get in the car to go home, who is the first person to bring up the game? What kind of questions and comments do you discuss? What does that conversation sound like?
4. List three or four behaviors of other parents or coaches that you believe are potentially harmful to children. Now take an honest look at your *own* behavior at games. Do your actions align with your beliefs about what your child is learning through youth sports?
5. Thinking of your particular community, list five ways parents and grandparents can be positive influences in the culture of youth sports.

## WEEK SEVEN

### **Myth Seven: The Money We Are Investing into Youth Sports Will Pay Off**

1. How have you accounted for youth sports in your family budget? Have you ever found paying for participation in sports a financial burden but done it anyway? If so, what was your reasoning?
2. The authors write that every family must "count the cost and weigh whether what they will 'put in' will necessarily balance what their child or family will 'get out' [of the sport]" ("What Kinds of Costs Are We Talking About?" section). Have you done this? If not, take the time to think on this. Perhaps even make a pro/con list. As you make this list, keep in mind the discussion of "owe" and "deserve" from Myth 2.
3. Margot and Dave provide ideas for "spreading the wealth" of athletic opportunities. While reading these ideas, do you find yourself thinking of youth sports as a "luxury" for underprivileged children or as something integral to every interested child's life?
4. Do you feel comfortable with the thought of your child playing in a less prestigious league? Our gut reactions can tell us a lot about the reasons we sign our children up for athletics.

## WEEK EIGHT

### Conclusion: How Do We Talk to Our Kids about Sports?

1. Add at least three of your own suggestions to the list of questions to discuss with your children (“Eight Best Questions to Discuss on the Way Home from the Game” section).
2. Look back at your answers to question #6 for Myth One: What amounts of time and money seem reasonable and wise for your family to spend in youth sports activities? Has your perspective changed? How can you maintain your commitments?
3. Look back at your answers to question #4 for Myth Two: Why does your child want to play a particular sport? Why do *you* want your child to play a particular sport? Reflect on whether your answers are different now. Has your perspective changed? How can you maintain perspective on youth sports as a particular season wears on?
4. As you reflect on the seven myths that Dave and Margot discuss in this book, which ones are the hardest to dispel? Which ones are still the most convincing to you?
5. Having read this book, have your views on youth sports changed? If so, how?
6. Reflect on Romans 12:2, which Dave and Margot wrote about in the introduction and which issues the call, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world.” What are two or three ways you might live according to the pattern of Christ within the realm of youth sports? How might this commitment to pattern yourself after Christ cause you to behave differently than other parents or grandparents do?
7. What questions does this book raise for you? What additional ideas do you have for finding sanity in the world of youth sports? Connect with author Dave King at [overplayed.king@gmail.com](mailto:overplayed.king@gmail.com).

