

BCL Ep. 333 The Good, the Bad, and the Overbooked: Rethinking Youth Sports with Keith McCurdy

We're back with Christian Counselor Keith McCurdy in this episode of the Live Sturdy series. We're diving into the topic of sports and athletics. Sports can build character, self-discipline, resilience, teamwork, and so many benefits.

But in today's culture of over-scheduling and sports obsession, how do we keep athletics in their proper place? And of course, not every child is wired in the same way physically with their abilities or their interest when it comes to sports. So what does healthy engagement look like and how can we reap all of the benefits without overdoing it? Join us for this episode of Base Camp Live. Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation.

Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings. We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation. Welcome to Base Camp Live.

Now your host, Davies Owens. Welcome to another episode of Base Camp Live. Davies Owens, your host here with you.

Thanks for taking time to join us on the journey of raising the next generation. I'm so excited in just a few weeks we're gonna be together, those of you who are coming to the ACCS or SCL conferences. I'll also be around some other conferences this summer.

It's just good to be connected in an environment where we can be face-to-face and get to meet each other. So stop by the Base Camp Live Zipcast booth there at the conference and say hello. If you're not at the conferences, that's totally fine as well.

As always, I love to hear from you. Info at BaseCampLive.com. Let me know what's on your mind. Let me know about episodes that you've thought about.

You love to hear topics addressed that maybe we've not done so in a while. And by the way, if you haven't looked recently, the Base Camp Live website continues to become a bit more sophisticated and a bit more heavily user-friendly. There's a little magnifying glass search bar you can jump into and put in a topic or a speaker and it does a pretty good job of digging back through eight years of what we generally call evergreen content, meaning most of the interviews and the conversations we have are as relevant today as they were years ago.

So unlike so many more news-oriented types of podcasts, this one should be helpful for years to come, which I'm excited about. As always, we are grateful for those who partner with us and listen. A quick shout out to Roy Griffith, the head of school at Rockbridge Academy in Crownsville, Maryland, along with many, many parents and teachers there at Rockbridge.

We sure appreciate your partnership, not only with Base Camp Live, but also being a Zipcast

school, as well as Patsy Henton, head of school at Covenant Classical Christian School in Columbia, South Carolina. So grateful as well for your just listening partnership and being with us on the journey. Always good to hear from you and always appreciate your connection with us at Base Camp Live and at Zipcast.

By the way, there's a lot obviously that I'm wanting to share and very excited about Zipcast as a really powerful tool to connect every week. That's 40 weeks of a school year for most schools with a weekly Zipcast, where in about 10, 12 minutes, you get to hear the fireside chat from your head of school or school leader, along with content both produced there locally. There's more customization than ever, as well as options to pull from national syndicated content from folks like Keith McCurdy, who I'll be talking with today.

So take a look at zipcast.media. If you're in a school that is not using Zipcast, we'd love to have you consider that as just a way to continue to build the Base Camp Live community through this great platform. Well, Keith McCurdy, of course, is no stranger to Base Camp Live. He has worked with families and children and parents and individuals for over 30 years in the area of mental health, 15,000 plus individuals and families.

He's been head of the board at a classical Christian school and knows well the environment of K-12 education. He speaks almost constantly around the country. He received his Master of Arts in Education from James Madison University.

He's the President and CEO of Total Life Counseling. He's also licensed in the state of Virginia as a licensed professional counselor and licensed marriage and family therapist. He has lots of licenses.

He knows what he's talking about. And more than anything, he's a great friend, a believer, and just cares so deeply for the next generation. Before we jump into the interview, as always, a quick shout out and thank you to the partner organizations that work with us, Classical Academic Press, Life Architects Coaching, the Classic Learning Test, and Wilson Hill Academy.

Again, check out the partners page on our website to learn more about these great supporting organizations. Without further ado, here is my conversation with Keith McCurdy. Well, Keith McCurdy, welcome back to Base Camp Live.

Thanks for having me back. It's good. Like I said, you're really kind of just co-host.

You just only appear every so often, because I... I'm glad I get to appear every so often. Again, I keep saying, at some point, we just need to officially go, okay, you're the co-host, but you need to be here more often to be always the co-host. But Keith, we do appreciate it.

And as I always say, it's so encouraging. The advantage point that you have is this in the trenches every day, both with folks coming to your office and traveling around the country and speaking. And so I'm excited to tackle this topic today about athletics, because it's certainly prevalent in so many people's lives.

And so why don't we start... First of all, if we're going to talk about athletics, I guess maybe we should just get a little disclaimer. Like, are we just kind of these nerdy guys that don't like athletics? So we're going to talk about it. Have you ever done athletics? Or Keith, give folks a little background on your kind of love or hate for athletics.

That's a great question. Well, the running joke is I love athletics. I mean, I will give you just this disclaimer, and then I'll give you some background.

You know, I'm the guy during the Olympics that will set the alarm to go off at 3 a.m. to get up to watch curling. I mean, I just, I love competition. But background specifically, I was an athlete growing up, very competitive athlete.

My children were very competitive athletes. My son actually is a collegiate athlete. He's an elite ultra-athlete, triathlete, captain of a triathlon team.

I actually coached in the classical school for 11 years, helped start a couple programs, basketball programs, middle school girls, JV boys, varsity boys, varsity girls. And I currently work nationally with a lot of collegiate and professional athletes. Stress management, conflict resolution, life skills.

I've gotten to know a lot of different collegiate coaches in several sports. So it's not just a part of my history. It's actually a world that I'm in in a way that most people are not on a regular basis.

Well, that's good. And did I say I love athletics? You did say that, and I believe it. No, it's true.

And I'm not nearly as, I don't have the active role you did, but I have many fond memories of three-year track and field guy in high school. And I still have my leather jacket. I actually am proud to put it on.

I still have those little bars I got for being, I was pretty darn fast for a little skinny guy. I could outrun about anybody in the 100 meter, and pretty involved in tennis competition growing up, and actually coached some soccer in high school for my boys. And so anyway, yeah, I mean, the point of all this is just let's get it out at the beginning.

We're coming from this with a pro-athletic perspective, but we want to be sober to this kind of cultural moment we're in where, you know, Super Bowl's kind of become the ultimate worship experience. The whole country stops. I mean, I've seen somebody do a whole write-up on just sort of looking at kind of football in particular, sort of just this entire religious ritual.

And we've kind of really elevated sort of to the point of idolatry and imbalance. But you see this all the time, don't you? I mean, the tensions, what are some of those tensions of trying to be athletic, but not be too athletic, and balance it all out? You know, I do see it all the time. It's interesting because many of you have heard before, you know, my kids are classically educated.

I've served on a board of a classical school, been actively involved in the movement for many years. But it's really interesting. Sometimes you can see some of the extremes in the private school, classical world, or Christian school world, and the public school world.

Sometimes in the public school world, everything is athletics. It is by far the most important thing. We hang our hat on the fact that our football team has been state champ 12 years in a row, you know, all kinds of stuff like that.

And it doesn't matter what they do. We keep them out of jail and they play football, you know. And sometimes you get the other extreme that, and I see this in the classical world, you know, we don't do athletics.

You know, it's really not what we're about and not really what we're pursuing with our students. And I even experienced that as we developed some different athletic programs where my kids were in school. It wasn't negative at all.

It was just new territory, which is not a bad thing. It was just like, wow, we're really not a powerhouse in athletics. We haven't really thought, is that a main part of our programming? So I think we get those extremes and I think that creates a tension because we're not sure where it should fit.

And we've seen those, you know, overindulgence of schools with Friday night lights and it's all about that problem. And yet I've, you know, what's the balance? I can think of, you know, Ambrose, where I was there at one point, we won the state basketball championship and it was so exciting and it brought the whole school together. But I think within that same month period, like the mock trial team went to state and I think they did a little prayer out in the driveway before everybody left to go to the state final.

So it's kind of, you know, it's amazing how, and I'm not saying, well, it's obviously different populations of students and families that follow these different things, but it's just athletics is always, you know, you feel that pressure as an administrator from parents. It's like, you know, when are we going to build the baseball field? And when's this coming? And isn't this, because we all have many, in many cases, myself included, very nostalgic memories of the Friday night lights and the big role of athletics. So it's hard, especially as a classical school to figure out where that balance is.

But yeah. Well, and it's interesting. I get asked a lot with small developing schools.

They say, you know, we really want to branch out athletically. Do you recommend anything? I say, yeah, cross country. Yeah.

All you need is a volunteer because the kids have shoes. And it's amazing because so many of the most valuable lessons that you can draw from athletics, you can see start developing just on a cross country team. You know, so it's, but I do think that tension is there.

And I think it's a good thing for us in the classical world to wrestle with, to say, can this be healthy? You know, can this be an asset to what we're doing to grow young men and women of good character? And which I would say is a big part of what we believe and what we pursue in the classical world. And I think even with the idea of training the affections, and I even take that a step further to even emotional regulation, those are things that we can deal with as well in the world of athletics, if we have the mindset of doing that. So we're, you know, when we think about the ditches you can fall into, you know, perhaps one is obviously it becomes everything to that child and that family.

And the other ditch is, it's really, we really don't even want it. It should have no place. In fact, it's an idol in our culture.

And so where do we, you know, where have you seen those extremes create real problems that, you know, make their way into your office? Yeah, I mean, on the first end, when it is athletics or everything, really what I see, especially in the lives of younger kids, is this idea that we've bought into many times as parents culturally, that it's all about keeping our kids busy, keeping our kids over-involved. And so the tension is families are coming in and they have the, you know, they have three kids and they're all involved in multiple activities, often athletic, and the family is strained because they're not operating as a family. And so when they pursue that and buy into that idea that it's all about athletics and it's all about, you know, now, and it's all about, we have to do this for their development later, it distorts their ability to really engage their family and grow their children well.

There was an interesting quote I saw recently. I think it was Tom Glavin, retired Major League Baseball player. And it was something like this, and I need to find it again.

He said, if your kid's travel coach is telling you that your kid has to play year round to keep up with the kid down the block who will be playing travel year round, run from that coach. And that's even what I hear echoed so many times from both players and coaches at the next level, collegiate professional, that how we're often viewing athletics and putting it on such a pedestal at an early age is not necessarily making better athletes. And I know we can dig into that a little more later.

So that's one extreme. I mean, understanding that when we put something on a pedestal that doesn't belong on that pedestal, it has a tendency to distort everything else. The other extreme in saying flat out no, I mean, I tell people, would you just say no to band? Would you just say no to art class? Oh no, those are better.

And my question is why? Because I believe that God has given us the ability to use all of these things to engage and raise our children. And I think when we say no to athletics, a hard no, we are missing a massive opportunity for a chunk of our students that really would connect with that. But I'll even give you a different one.

We're missing an opportunity for a chunk of students that are not even athletic. And a great

example of that is I started coaching years ago and apparently my daughter, when she was in sixth grade, signed me up to coach the middle school girls team that didn't exist. A friend of mine was the head of school and she said, hey, dad, you're the coach.

We've already, I signed the paperwork for you. I said, what? She said, actually, he said, you've got to come in and sign, but you're coaching and we have a team now. But it was a group of sixth grade girls, which meant we were playing sixth, seventh, and eighth graders for that season.

So we got hammered. We had games where we had one team hung 109 points on us in one game and we had like six. I mean, it was unbelievable.

But during that season, it's amazing what we focused on. We never focused on winning. We focused on improving different things.

And through that, I constantly heard comments from parents about their children that weren't athletic, how they saw it grow that child's confidence, how they saw it grow that child's work ethic. You know, a child that wouldn't in a public system ever play a team on a team because they would never make the team. They're not good.

But in the classical world, in the small school world, we have the opportunity for these kids to taste all kinds of life experiences that we can use in shaping them in a way that isn't possible in other settings. So I think that when we fall into that ditch, we miss an opportunity, multiple opportunities. Yeah, and the root, you know, going back just a second, from your perspective, what do you think is some of the motivations behind that, I've got to push my child? I mean, I'm sure if some of it's just the FOMO worry that we're going to be that parent that didn't push our child to do everything, or that's one, I see that, I see it maybe kind of in some ways maybe vicariously, like we really enjoyed basketball and so we expect our child to enjoy it and to do better than we did.

I mean, what are some of the things you see maybe parents even unknowingly or subconsciously pushing because of things that maybe aren't actually that healthy? Yeah, the two biggest that I see that are pretty consistent across the board that fall into kind of one camp or the other more so, I mean, the ones you mentioned are there, but the biggest is the myth that is out there right now, especially in the travel athletic world from coaches that do not know what they're saying, but they believe it, that your child has to do this to get an opportunity to play in school, they have to do this to get an opportunity to play at the next level, and that this will make them better and equipped to play at the next level. So that number one is a myth and not backed up by data. We'll talk more about that a little bit later.

The other is just the overwhelming therapeutic approach to life today that I want to keep my kid happy and athletics at a young age especially is so in our children's face that children are going to parents constantly, I need to play this, I want to do this, I want to do that, I want to do that. So I have parents most often in my office feeling guilty if they are not signing their kids up

for all these things that all their kids and their friends are doing. And so those two are pushing it.

I mean, I would argue that several years ago, maybe a decade ago, two decades ago, we got to, I would see more of those parents of trying to live out their athletic dreams through their child, things like that. But it's today, it's those two camps more than anything. And both are wrong.

Yeah, and I think both of them are, sometimes again, we don't realize really what's that true motivation that's pushing us along or we think we have a child that really is doing fairly well and maybe they really are the next Olympiad. So let's really see where this thing goes. And I think in all of my life, I've never seen, I can think of one child that was at our school in Atlanta who his parents pulled him out in sixth grade.

He's still today a world renowned triathlete. I mean, like, okay, that's probably was a kid to pull out. But I can also think of another dad who recently said to me, yeah, we basically put all our chips on our daughter's ballet program.

She danced until her sophomore year in college. This was all she did until she blew out her knee. And now looking back on it, there is one trick wonder here and all the things that were missed out on.

So, yeah. Well, and what we know, I would argue that some of the consulting I do in the business world, what we know in the business world, what we know in the educational world, what we know in the athletic world is echoed with Aristotle and Socrates praising the generalist over the specialist, the pentathlete over the marathon runner. And the reality is we're in a world that has flipped the script on that, that says we need to specialize our children early and then grow that specialization.

But there are two problems with that. Those who only focus on their specialty never develop its full capacity. And those who never learn to generalize are ill-equipped later at life when it takes a left-hand turn.

We know in the world of work, in the world of education, in the world of athletics, that if you're a generalist first, multiple exposures across multiple categories, then later as you specialize, all the things you've learned from all those experiences actually craft that specialty to its fullest. Yeah, a great conversation I had six months ago with a collegiate baseball coach about recruiting. He was at a conference and we spoke afterwards, very elite, high-level team.

And he said, we cannot stand baseball players that only play baseball. I said, what do you mean? He said, well, it's not that we can't stand them. He goes, most of them are good kids.

He said, usually their parents are more obnoxious. He said, but I will tell you the players that play multiple sports, that play different seasons, that have different activities all the way up through high school are so much more well-rounded, not just in their headspace, not just in their character, but even in their athletic development. Yeah, it makes sense.

Then when we specialize them in college, they are so much better, do a better job, and they have much more longevity. Well, we're gonna take a break, and I want to come back, because I do want to get into, there are good aspects of athletics you're touching on a number of them, but I was just gonna say, it is kind of interesting. As I recall, I mean, basketball's evolution came out of coaches looking for something for the football players to do in the off-season.

So isn't that what you want them to cross-train and not just be one-trick wonders? But you don't hear that anymore. So at any rate, all right, let's take a break and come back, because there are a lot of things that are very good about athletics, even if you don't win state every year, that, as you alluded to, are worth taking time and effort to be a part of. So we'll be right back and continue our conversation.

Hey, Basecamp Live listeners. A recent Pew Research study revealed that only 30% of millennial and Gen Z parents live within a 100-mile radius of extended family. That means that many families are missing the wisdom and support of older generations, and more than ever, we need strong, consistent school communities to walk next to us, providing rich connection and helpful weekly tips.

That is exactly why I created Zipcast. Zipcast gives schools a proven platform to communicate more personally and effectively with their parent community. Imagine as a parent receiving a short weekly audio message from your school leadership, not just announcements, but real insights into what's on their hearts and minds, paired with practical wisdom from national parenting and educational experts like Keith McCurdy and Justin Early, along with experts on classical Christian education.

We even include short testimonials and parenting tips from fellow parents all around the country. You can listen anywhere and at any time. And now with Zipcast 2.0, schools can customize their messages even more, offering a truly personal and engaging way to build connection and shared vision.

If you're a school leader and not yet using Zipcast, I wanna encourage you to consider it for the 25, 26 school year. And if you're a parent at a school that is not yet using Zipcast, take a moment and encourage your leadership to explore it. It's easy to use, affordable and effective.

And in today's fast-paced world, Zipcast is a proven tool used by over 60 schools this past school year to deliver encouragement, insights and connections in just 10 minutes a week. We like to say it's about encouraging you on the go with what you need to know. Check it all out at zipcast.media to hold your spot as we have limited spaces available for the upcoming school year.

I want to take just a moment during our break and let you know about the great work that's being done by Wilson Hill Academy. They offer a vibrant, rich and accredited classical Christian education available to families and schools almost anywhere. With a click of a button, students join master teachers and friends live online from all over the world to engage in deep and lively

discussion, solve math problems, conduct science experiments, translate Latin, deliver thesis presentations and so much more.

At Wilson Hill, students make lifelong friends and graduate well-prepared for college and beyond. Discover what's possible for your family or school at [wilsonhillacademy.com slash Basecamp](http://wilsonhillacademy.com/slashBasecamp). Keith, we talked about a number of things that are good about athletics.

I mean, it's good for your health. It's good for lots of things. What do you see and what advice do you give to parents who are maybe on the other side of this thing? I'm not sure my kid's an athletic kid.

Maybe they're not going to do any of that. Yeah, I think if we, you know, we know the surface level things we hear all the time. Well, it teaches teamwork, it teaches cooperation, all that sort of stuff.

And that is true, but I would argue that it's an opportunity if we do it for the right reasons, we have the right coaches, and that is important to figure out if they're the right coaches, to teach something at a different level, at a much deeper level that's more foundational. You know, I'll give you a handful. One is humility.

It's amazing how we can teach humility both through winning and through losing. You know, how do we celebrate victory without slamming those that we conquered? You know, how can we still be encouraging and kind and loving to those that we have beat on the field of play rather than parading around and going to extremes that we often see? And I would argue that distorts winning, takes it to an unhealthy place. It becomes braggadocious.

It just distorts really what we've accomplished. I think humility in losing as well. You know, the idea that understanding that losing isn't the end of the world, but also that this game and the effort I put into it while good, it still sometimes means I'm gonna come up short, that I'm maybe not always the best, that I still have things to work on.

I mean, if we frame it correctly, we frame losing as a moment or an opportunity to continue growing, that's a form of humility. And so those are wonderful opportunities. Other things that we see, I mean, my goodness, conflict resolution.

If you've ever coached JV or varsity basketball boys, well, actually, or middle school girls, oh my goodness, the opportunities there about how to manage emotion, manage the emotional regulation, conflict resolution, are available, they're available every day, practice or games. You know, how to work hard when it's difficult, when it's uncomfortable. You know, one of the things I often use when I speak to students, I talk to students all the time and I say, you know, it's amazing how much difficulty we give our parents, you know, taking out the trash, doing our chores.

And I talk about the notion that we always avoid struggle, but not in athletics. And I ask them, I say, how many of you train hard? And they all raise their hands. And I say, well, you know, what

happened if all your training was easy? What would be the outcome? And they all laugh and they say, we'd never get any better.

I say, right. How come we don't apply that to the rest of life? That struggle actually grows us. All of these things you're describing really are the virtues that we want in a human for other aspects of life.

I'm sure you've seen these statistics that, you know, various sources say about it, that 95% of Fortune 500 CEOs played sports, men and women, and 94% of women that are in C-suite positions were former athletes. I mean, so many people that were, you know, because of what you're saying, you're gonna run into a conflict. You're gonna have to figure out how to work together and deal with losing situations sometimes.

It makes sense. Well, it does. And other things that jump out, you know, you learn to encourage others.

You learn to, I mean, think about this. You learn to both accept praise and correction. You know, we know in the world of work, well, actually in many different disciplines, the best leaders were first the best followers and athletics allows you to be a good follower.

And it's things like that, you know, playing for the benefit of others. I mean, I think about my son. My son is an elite level triathlete and you score the first several runners, depending on the meet.

You know, you're three score for your team or four. And so sometimes what makes the team successful is the fourth guy. And you realize you're running for someone else, you know, not just for yourself.

I mean, it's amazing that that's how we can help sculpt this idea. If we go all the way back to growth, growth coming from healthy struggle, then athletics allows us to learn to struggle well. But it also then goes back to, is that our mindset? Or is our mindset all about hanging trophies and, you know, and just victories? Now we want trophies, we want victories because we want to see some success from our effort.

But I would argue the process of getting there is the rich soil for the growth. Yeah, that is so, you know, and it's different in art. It's different in music.

They have different rich soil for growth. And it can be very complimentary. Hopefully you're raising a renaissance, you know, men and women that are capable of doing all of these things.

Interesting, in my many roles at Ambrose years ago, I remember doing a survey for our varsity. Actually, we did a survey just looking at afterschool involvements and just trying to get a sense of how busy people were after school. And it was very interesting, Keith, because our varsity basketball boys had the busiest schedules between their practice schedules and other obligations.

And on average, they had the highest GPA. And the conclusion we reached was that they were well ordering their schedules versus students that were just, had lots of discretionary time and delaying being disciplined. So it's interesting how that was an advantage.

There've been several different studies that have looked at athletics over the years like that. And what we know through high school, when you look at high school athletes, the typical varsity high school athlete has higher GPA than the typical student in the school. Because something else that develops, it develops time management organizational skills.

Because if you're going to be an athlete, the sacrifice you make is other things, not school. Again, it comes back to the coach in school. Are you implementing those policies? Are you holding that standard? But that is true, that's a reality.

Now we're beginning to see that change. We're losing some of that at the next level, especially with, we don't have to start a big argument here, NIL, paying athletes for all kinds of things at the college level, changing schools every year. I mean, we're running into the distortion of some of this at the next level that we've got to be careful about.

And it's almost like travel basketball at the college level. Right, which is good, so. So unbalanced and all that.

So I think to the point of these values of, it forces you to well-order your life. And I think the obvious is just that we need as humans to move our bodies. And I think about how sedentary, not only do, you've commented before, like on the health and nutrition side of it, like, okay, you gotta eat.

You can't just have a Pop-Tart and go through the day. And you also need to move your body. And unfortunately, so many of our schools are just all about seat time, and especially get to high school.

Sure. So, I mean, again, it may be obvious, but it may be not. Those varsity basketball guys are probably sleeping pretty well, because they probably really push their bodies.

Right, well, that's exactly right. No, in athletics in general, I mean, we're in a country today that it's harder to have active children. I mean, this is a piece that is not in something we've already talked about, but we have a culture built around inactivity, around digital time, screen time, so many other things that we talk about on so many other podcasts.

Yeah. But one of the effects is we have less space for physical activity. You know, physical activity, when I grew up, we were outside all the time.

We were always outside. We were always running. We were always riding bikes, things like that.

That is not what happens in the life of the typical child today. Sometimes the only avenue for that is athletics. And there are many children I work with where I tell their parents, choose

something.

Get them on a team, because other than that, they are not active. Yeah, and even their e-bike or their e-scooter, it's not really causing them to put it up in calories. No, it's not.

No, it's not. It is really, it's a great point. Well, okay, so we're going to take a break again, but I want to, so any other, just the good, there is so much good.

You've talked about a lot. Anything else you'd mention? Well, I think there's a benefit in athletics. I see this a lot.

And we mentioned this a little bit with humility and losing, but it is a wonderful experience for a growing child, teenager, athlete, to realize I'm not the best, but I can work hard for something, and I can see growth. I mean, because that's a needed way of thinking in life. You get your first job in the corporation.

You want to walk in going, I'm okay with not being the best, but I know I can work hard, and I know I can make improvement. I know I can attain. I know I can achieve.

I know I can accomplish. And we have a lot of children today that do not have that simple mindset of, and it's a growth mindset. It's a different way of framing a growth mindset.

I'd lack something. I have the ability to seek out a way to grow it and develop it, and it will lead me to better things. And I think that athletics on the whole has a way of helping us capture that mindset when done well.

Yeah, that makes sense. Before we get a break, let me, just a quick opinion on the value of an individual sport versus team sports. I mean, obviously, if you're like, I ran track and field, and so we're individually competing, and it rolls up points for the team.

And so you get the team camaraderie, but it's very different than being in the midst of a five-person basketball play, and you've got to really make sure you're working well with your teammate in the play itself. Yeah, and I think that's the piece where you look at teamwork and coordination of how you develop as it relates to others on your team. Let's say cross-country versus basketball.

They both are a team sport, but one is a much more individual focus, individual development focus. Wonderful benefit of that. And you learn some teamwork, in a sense, because you're running to benefit others, you're encouraging your teammates.

I mean, one of the most encouraging sports you can ever go to, in my opinion, is cross-country. You're cheering the last person that has to walk it in. I mean, so it develops those things.

But on a sport like basketball, teamwork means something very different. You're actually learning to play a role meshed with others. And that's interesting because you've got the point guard that it's no longer all about them.

Cross-country runner, when they're on the track, when they're on the course, it's all about them, their headspace, their struggle. When you're the basketball player, it's all about me in coordination with my teammates. Right, and that's what I'm asking, because from that standpoint, you're definitely creating more of a sense of camaraderie and sort of sheer struggle.

Yeah, it's okay. Well, what I've seen in the basketball court is we will have a stellar player come in that absolutely lights out, one of the best players we've seen in several years. He still has to learn how to compliment the rest of his teammates.

Then there's humility in that, that I can't do it all. I'm not scoring 50 points a game because guess what? The rest of my team will quit. Right, and I've seen that.

I've seen that. One of the beautiful moments at Ambrose years ago is we were in a winning streak, and it's one of those games where you're so far ahead, you know you're gonna win, so they brought in some of the guys on the bench that had these moments of just great glory that would have never, they got to ride on the coattails, but they got to share the glory because they were on the team. So, I mean, those are just examples of that.

All right, why don't we take a quick break and come back, because I want to make sure we've looked at, just we talked about some struggles, but I want to come back and just make sure that we're in balancing well, making wise decisions, and not falling into either side of the trap here. So take another quick break and be right back to continue our conversation about athletics with Keith McCurdy. Graduating can be intimidating.

Life Architects brings peace to the process by guiding your student through proven pathways to discover who God made them to be and how they can reflect that identity in meaningful work. We call it vocational discipleship, and it's a practice we offer one-on-one in school-wide workshops and as a consulting service to transform campus culture. Learn more at lifearchitectscoaching.com today.

So Keith, if you were talking to a family, let's say they have younger grammar school children and this whole athletic pressure starting to build, what's just some wisdom and advice you'd give them as they're starting to navigate all of those opportunities? Yeah, I often tell parents, beware, but have fun. And they look at me like, what does that mean? I say, well, beware, meaning the idea that if we do not create involvement athletics that is in harmony with our family, meaning it allows our family to function well, then it will distort our family. And so as we go into it, we wanna have fun, we wanna engage our children, we want them involved in different things, but we really have to ask, what's the effect it has on the family? I have this conversation, unfortunately, in my office all the time with folks, and I say, you have three kids and they're each involved on two teams.

So you have six practices virtually every day. And they're like, yeah, yeah, we do. And even if they're still riding the top of the wave, like, this is so exciting, this is awesome, we've been

drinking the Kool-Aid, they're gonna be the next LeBron or Michael Jordan.

I say, when do y'all have family dinner together? Well, they never do. Are you going to church? Well, yeah, when we don't have a tournament, so that'll be like July. I mean, it's very easy to begin picking apart the foundational elements of glue in a family that have disappeared because of over-commitment to athletics.

And so the key is making sure it's in harmony with healthy family functioning. I tell folks, it's okay to stretch a little. It's okay to have periods where some things look a little different, but is the core there? Are we still having most of our dinners together? Are we still at church most of the Sundays? Are we still capturing the essence of what healthy family functioning is, or does that become the exception? And I wonder, again, as we're so much, as we're talking about what is balance, I could also see another, the other extreme is, athletics are actually filling time in my child's life so I can go and do other things because I'm busy as well.

So it's like a babysitter mechanism. And then you get into the situation of then, well, then what's reasonable? You talked about just a number of practices, but how many, that whole image of that child looking up into the bleachers and dad's never there because he's always too busy or mom's not there. We need to be present.

And even if it's just, how does that work? Well, yeah, and I tell parents a lot of times that when their kids start getting a little bit older, older grammar school, things like that, and they're interested in things, say, you know, get them involved in one thing a season, one activity a season. And that activity could be a sport, that activity could be a band. I mean, it could be different things, but I tell parents, try to get your kids to try a sport or two at some time, sometime early in their life, you know, just to see how they adapt to it, the benefit it can give you.

It also gives you something to celebrate with your child, something to talk to them about. It gives you actually more material to engage your child with. Because when we don't have that, sometimes we pursue our own devices and then we're more detached from our children.

So I encourage them, you know, just maybe one thing a season. If you have multiple children, sometimes you have to rotate. I dealt with a family recently, they have nine kids and the parents, they literally, every season, three kids get to do something and that's it.

And they tell the kids- Why don't they just start their own basketball team and then they can all be together. Well, yeah, they're all different ages though. But they say, no, three kids can do something at the same time.

And yet we still coordinate it to where there's overlap of like two of them were playing on the same team or something because they're close in age. Because we are not going to sell our family out. And so I think we just have to say, you know, it's okay to have them involved.

I tell folks, maybe one thing a season, of course, this blew up with us, with our son, high school,

one sport a season, he's like, great, I'm gonna be a triathlete. He's brilliant. Actually, middle school, he did that.

But it's that idea of just having some measure, some margin of involvement, something we invest in with our kids potentially. I tell parents, coach, even if you don't know anything about the sport in rec league, they just want a warm body to get out there and love on the kids. So it's opportunities even for that.

But beware of over-involvement. And so when parents are starting and they have a couple kids, I say, pick one thing. Let them do one thing, do it well.

At the end of the season, evaluate it. Is it too much? Was it not enough? Do we have tons of room left? Because none of this has to happen quickly. Well, and so that's great advice to a parent.

Just in our final moments here, I was thinking earlier on, you talked about the types of athletic offerings that a school might want to make available. And you talk about cross-country being, you know, grab some shoes, let's go. It's not a complicated, we don't have to build a field for it.

I think it's interesting, a lot of classical Christian schools have thought a little bit out of the traditional box. I can think of schools that have an archery team or a fencing team. That was the second one I was going to say, is archery.

And actually, I think it's still going on US Olympics. They sponsor startup programs for so many schools. Yeah, yeah.

I know a lot of classical schools where they'll outfit them initially. And it's amazing to me. I know so many students that you would never think would be on an archery team and they're out there loving it.

I know, I know. I think it was a covenant school in Dallas years ago that had a very competitive rowing team. In fact, they're like, you know, where do you even find water there in Dallas? And they were like a national, you know, this little scrappy Bad News Bears, you know, rowing team that just dominated.

So, you know, it's just, it's amazing. You don't have, you know, it's hard with basketball, football, you know, traditional thinking. I keep thinking we're classical, we should have like the catapulting team.

I mean, what else could we come up with? No, no, no. Trebuchet. Okay, sorry.

Yeah, that thing. It's called Trebuchet. Right.

Trebuchet, yes. No, and I think that sometimes that's our limitation is we think we don't have facility, a facility to support certain athletics. And so for a small school, think what can you do without the facility? Right, exactly.

And there are things. You can do archery without the facility. You need a field.

You can do cross country without a facility. You can do some track without a facility. I mean, it's amazing what you can do without a facility at times.

But I do think we have to balance and say, you know, does this provide us rich soil to do good work in for our kids? And I would argue it does if we have certain measure about it. Yeah, yeah, that's good. And I think in a lot of cases, smaller schools too, I know here in Idaho, if your school doesn't have a particular athletic offering, you can participate in the public schools like Liam Rand Track and middle school, which was, by the way, really interesting for him to get, that was his little dose of public school life was go run track with these guys and like, okay, now I got, you know, I'm really more thankful for my school.

But it was- He came back in middle school all tattooed. He's right, that's right. That's when it all went downhill.

But there really are some unique ways that we can think about how to solve this problem without feeling we've got to build it all on a campus, so to speak. Right. Anyhow, well, Keith, thanks so much.

This is a big topic and I think we've covered a lot of ground. I'm sure there's more things to talk about, but I appreciate you giving some wisdom and encouragement to us. Absolutely, and thank you for having me on again as your kind of co-host.

Kind of co-host, that's a good term for you. I appreciate it. Thanks, Keith.

Well, you did it. You stayed till the very end of the podcast. Thanks so much for listening to this conversation and a special thanks to our sponsors who make this episode possible, Classical Academic Press, Wilson Hill Academy, Light Phone, and the Classic Learning Test.

Hey, I want to encourage you if you're out there, whatever podcast player you're on, leave us a five-star rating, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, whatever it may be. We'd love to hear from you as well. It's always InfoBase Camp Live.

What's on your mind? Help us tell stories that may be reflective of what you've seen impacting in your personal life or as a teacher in your school of what classical Christian education is doing, again, around the world. We appreciate you as a faithful listener. Hey, we're gonna be back again next week for another episode.

Please join us. We wouldn't want you to miss.