What Do Mothers Want from Youth Sports?

October 10, 2014  |  Dana Point, CA
espnW: Women + Sports Summit

#espnWsummit  |  @AspenInstSports  |  #ProjectPlay
Support for this conversation is provided by espnW, which collaborated in the planning of this roundtable and in commissioning the espnW/Aspen Institute Project Play Survey of Sports Parents. The American College of Sports Medicine supplied the audience polling software.

The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program thanks each of these event partners.
Welcome

The Aspen Institute’s Project Play is the first independent, national-level exercise designed to provide the thought leadership for stakeholders to get all children active through sports. Since the launch of the initiative last year, we have hosted a multi-day summit, nine roundtables and an ESPN Town Hall with President Clinton, Kobe Bryant and Allyson Felix. More than 300 leaders have participated in our events, sharing ideas and breakthrough strategies.

Today’s event is the last before the 2015 Project Play Summit, to be held Feb. 25 at the News- eum in Washington, D.C. There, leaders from sport, health, business innovation, media, philanthropy and other sectors will explore our forthcoming report, “Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game,” identifying the eight most promising opportunities to deliver universal access to an early positive experience in sports. Right now, the trend is mov- ing in the other direction, with participation in team sports among 6-12 years old having fallen from 44.5 percent to 40 percent over the past five years.

Results from the nationally representative espnW/Aspen Institute Project Play Survey of Sports Parents, released this week, show broad concern about the state of youth sports. Most are not happy about the quality or behavior of coaches, the injury risks, the time commitment required, and the rising costs of participation.

Mothers are the game-changers. They control most of the household purchasing decisions, and often are the parent who chooses the initial play activities of children. Increasingly, women are exercising their voice on which organized sports their kids flow into. The NFL recognized as much last year, responding to declining youth participation and increasing concussion concerns by launching a campaign to encourage mothers to keep their kids in tackle football.

But the role of mothers needs to expand beyond that of gatekeeper, facilitator and team mom. “Children and youth – not to mention families, communities and females themselves – benefit in many ways when females hold positions of power in sport,” writes Nicole LaVoi, University of Minnesota researcher. When women coach girls, girls are more likely to enjoy the experience and go on to coach themselves. Women who coach become role models for girls and boys, challenging stereotypes tied to gender, power and leadership. Yet only 1 out of 4 youth coaches are women. Sport boards are dominated by men as well.

We hope today’s dialogue helps identify opportunities to grow the influence of mothers within youth sports, and helps improve the experience for girls. We look forward to the perspectives you will provide on the results of the parents’ survey; insights will be reflected in the Project Play report. Thank you for sharing, and participating.

Tom Farrey
@TomFarrey
Agenda

October 10, 2014 | St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort | Dana Point, CA

3:00pm Introductions
Laura Gentile, espnW vice president
Tom Farrey, Sports & Society Program executive director and ESPN correspondent
Alison Overholt, espnW editor-in-chief

3:15pm What Do Mothers Want?
In this session, panelists explore the results of the espnW/Aspen Institute Project Play Survey of Sports Parents. What’s the story behind the numbers? Why do the concerns of mothers and fathers differ? Dialogue focuses on the topics covered in the survey:
- Cost of participation
- Time commitment
- Emphasis on “winning” over having fun
- Quality and behavior of coaches
- Concussions and safety

4:15pm What Do Girls Need?
Like most kids, they want access to an early positive experience in youth sports. But barriers remain, and some are specific to girls. A lack of female coaches. Higher rates of concussion than boys in sports like soccer. Cultural and family expectations about the role of girls. We will explore what girls need to ensure that they stay active and are supported as athletes.

4:45pm How to Elevate the Priorities of Mothers, Girls?
Moms and girls need seats at the table when decisions around youth sport activity are made. How to empower them to be leaders in their communities as they push for safety, other reforms? We identify ways to make sure that their voices are heard and valued.

5:15pm Closing Comments + Next Steps
Get Social

Please share your thoughts and perspectives on the topic through the following means:

Social Media
@espnW  
#espnWsummit  
@AspenInstSports  
#ProjectPlay

Websites
Aspen Institute Project Play microsite: www.AspenProjectPlay.org  
espnW Summit: www.espnWsummit.com  
espnW: www.espnW.com

Email
sportsandsociety@aspeninstitute.org

Survey
Post-event, we will send a brief survey to capture your feedback and additional ideas.

For more information on Project Play, sign up for our distribution list at www.AspenProjectPlay.org.
A few numbers to inform today’s conversation:

2,400,000,000,000  Purchasing power of American mothers, in dollars

3,800,000  Number of “mommy blogs,” or online spaces where mothers share news, insights and other information with other mothers on sports parenting and many other topics

46  Percentage of mothers who say that they alone make the decisions about introducing technology to a home. Their significant other makes the decision 24% of the time; children at 2%. Mutual decisions account for the rest.

44  Percentage of team managers of youth soccer teams who were women, in a Minnesota survey of soccer teams in 2009

25  Percentage of the 6.5M youth coaches of children’s teams ages 14 and under who are women, according to a national survey of households conducted for Project Play

20  Percentage of decision-making positions (including coaches) that must be reserved for women within all National Olympic Committees, as mandated by the International Olympic Committee in 2004

13.4  Concussions per 10,000 exposures in high school girls’ soccer, which has the third highest-rate of head injuries after football (27) and ice hockey (16). It’s more than twice the rate of boys’ high school soccer (6.5).

13  Percentage of youth coaches who were female in 1984

5  Percentage of head coaches of boys’ teams who were female, according to a survey of Minnesota youth soccer teams in 2009

4-6  Number of ACL injuries that female adolescent athletes suffer for every one ACL injury suffered by a male athlete playing a comparable sport

Participants

**Marimo Berk-Drummond** has dedicated fourteen years of her life to the classroom and community. A few years after the birth of her son, Ms. Berk-Drummond co-founded the Creekside School in San Jose for children with Autism. The Creekside School is devoted to discovering untapped potential often overlooked due to communicative and/or sensory motor-based issues. When she is not fighting for equal access to quality education, you can find Ms. Berk-Drummond competing in triathlons and cheering for the San Francisco Giants.

**Jill Brooks, Ph.D.** is a clinical neuropsychologist who maintains a private practice, Head to Head Consultants, P.A. in Gladstone, New Jersey. She has a particular interest in prevention of concussions in sports, and sex and gender issues related to concussions. Dr. Brooks was instrumental in developing a statewide grant program for high schools in New Jersey in cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services, creating a concussion preseason baseline testing and surveillance program. In 2012, she was named one of the “Top Women Who Will Change the Way Sports are Played” by ESPN Magazine.

**Anita DeFrantz** is an attorney and an Olympic medalist who has served as president of the LA84 Foundation since 1987. The LA84 Foundation is the legacy of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games which has as its mission serving youth through sport and enhancing the knowledge of sport in society. Ms. DeFrantz was elected a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1986. She is the chair of the Women and Sport Commission of the IOC in the United States. She has served on the Executive Board of the IOC, and in 1997 she was the first woman ever elected a vice president of the IOC.

**Crystal Dixon** is the mother of Donnovan Hill, who was injured playing Pop Warner Football on November 6, 2011. His injury left him paralyzed from the neck down. Since his injury, Donnovan has continued to stay positive, fighting hard every day to get better. He attends Jordan High School, is in the International Baccalaureate program, and enjoys writing poetry and music. He is a joy to be around, and he keeps Ms. Dixon going every day. Ms. Dixon had to quit her job of 15 years to care for Donnovan, and she is now a stay-at-home mom. Life has been challenging since his injury, but every day that he is here with her makes it all worth it.

**Tom Farrey** founded and leads the Aspen Institute’s Sports & Society Program, whose mission is to convene leaders, facilitate dialogue and inspire solutions that help sport serve the public interest. Farrey is also an award-winning journalist for ESPN, having received the 2014 Alfred I. duPont/Columbia University Award, 2013 Edward R. Murrow Award, and two Emmy Awards. At both the Aspen Institute and ESPN, he has explored the connections between sport and the largest themes in society: education, globalization, technology, race, and ethics, among others. He is author of *Game On: The All-American Race to Make Champions of Our Children* (2008, ESPN Books).
Julie Foudy is a former midfielder for the U.S. Women’s National Team (1987-2004), serving as the team’s captain from 2000 until her retirement. In her 17-year national team tenure, the U.S. women won two FIFA Women’s World Cup titles (1991, 1999), captured two Olympic gold medals (1996, 2004), and an Olympic silver medal (2000), en-route to becoming one of the most successful national soccer teams ever in the sport. She was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame in August 2007. Ms. Foudy served as president of the Women’s Sports Foundation from 2000-2002, and since 2005 has served as an analyst for ESPN and espnW.

Laura Gentile is vice president of espnW, ESPN’s first dedicated business built to serve, inform and inspire female athletes and fans. Ms. Gentile joined ESPN in January 2003 and has served as director, advertising and marketing; senior director of brand management; and vice president, assistant to the president. Ms. Gentile was a fellow of WICT’s Betsy Magness Leadership Institute Class XVII, and was named to Street and Smith’s Sports Business Journal Forty Under 40 Class of 2012 and an SBJ Game-Changer. In 2012, she was appointed to the U.S. Department of State’s Council to Empower Women and Girls Through Sports, developed by former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Deborah Slaner Larkin was named CEO of the Women’s Sports Foundation in August 2014. Ms. Larkin has over thirty years of executive experience in corporate, government and non-profit leadership, serving most recently as the executive director of the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Foundation from 2010 through March 2013. Throughout her career, Ms. Larkin has focused her efforts on promoting civil rights, women’s leadership and gender equity. For eight years, she served on the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports where she co-facilitated the renowned President’s Council Report: Physical Activity & Sport in the Lives of Girls, and gave expert testimony before Congress on health, gender equity and Title IX issues.

Nicole M. LaVoi, Ph.D. is faculty in the School of Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota, Associate Director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport and the co-founder of the Minnesota Youth Sport Research Consortium. Dr. LaVoi’s research focuses on the effect of adult sideline behaviors in youth sport, barriers experienced by female coaches, and media representations of females in sport. She has co-produced two documentaries on women in sport including the 2014 Regional Emmy Winner “Media Coverage & Female Athletes: Women Play Sport Just Not on TV” and serves on the national advisory boards for both espnW and the Alliance of Women Coaches.
Jordan Metzl, M.D. is a sports medicine physician at the Hospital for Special Surgery, America’s premier orthopedic hospital in NYC. The author of bestselling titles *The Exercise Cure* and *The Athlete’s Book of Home Remedies*, Dr. Metzl is the medical columnist for *Triathlete* Magazine. His upcoming book *Run Your Best Life* is expected in 2015. Dr. Metzl appears in media and print including the *Today Show*, *National Public Radio* and the *New York Times*, discussing fitness and health. Dr. Metzl created the Ironstrength Workout, featured on RunnersWorld.com, which he teaches throughout the country. He is a 31-time marathoner and 12-time Ironman finisher.

Alison Overholt, founding editor of espnW, is currently editor-in-chief for espnW and an adjunct professor at NYU’s Robert Preston Tisch Center. In a prior role as Deputy Editor at ESPN Publishing, she managed the redesigns of two 500,000 circulation special-interest publications for the company. Ms. Overholt has also created digital content strategies for Gerson Lehrman Group, NASDAQ OMX, Robin Hood and Trinity Wall Street, and directed a major editorial crowdsourcing and digital development project for Against All Odds Productions. She began her career as a writer and editor at *Fast Company* magazine. Her writing has also appeared in *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *MORE*, *Working Mother*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Inc.*, *Sports Illustrated: Women and Fitness*.

Donna de Varona was the youngest world record holder at the 1960 Olympic Games (13 years old). Four years later she broke an unprecedented 18 world’s fastest times and world swimming records and won two Olympic Gold Medals. After retiring from competitive sports in 1965, Ms. de Varona became the youngest and one of the first female sports broadcasters on network television. An Emmy award winner, she helped establish the Women’s Sports Foundation, serving as its first president and chair. Additionally, she has served as a consultant to the United States Senate focusing on Title IX and numerous legislative initiatives in respect to USOC governance, was chair of the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup, and spent four terms on the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Today she is a member of the executive board of Special Olympics International, lead advisor to the EY Women Athletes business network, chair of the International Swimming Hall of Fame, and a member of the IOC Women and Sport Commission.
About the Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute has campuses in Aspen, Colorado, and on the Wye River on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. It also maintains offices in New York City and has an international network of partners.

www.aspeninstitute.org

About Sports & Society

The mission of the Sports & Society Program is to convene leaders, facilitate dialogue and inspire solutions that help sports serve the public interest, with a focus on the development of healthy children and communities. The program provides a venue for thought leadership where knowledge can be deepened and breakthrough strategies explored on a range of issues.

www.SportsandSociety.org

About Project Play

The Aspen Institute’s Project Play is a thought leadership exercise that will lay the foundation for the nation to get and keep more children involved in sports, with a focus on addressing the epidemic of physical inactivity. The initiative convenes sport, policy and other leaders in a series of roundtable and other events, and in early 2015 will publish a framework for action that can help stakeholders create “Sport for All, Play for Life” communities.

www.AspenProjectPlay.org

About espnW

espnW serves women who love sports. espnW.com provides an engaging environment that offers total access to female athletes and the sports they play, takes fans inside the biggest events, and shares a unique point of view on the sports stories that matter most to women. Founded in July 2010, espnW lives across television, films, events, digital and social platforms. The annual espnW: Women + Sports Summit is the leading event of its kind in the sports industry. The Women’s Sports Foundation is a charity of choice for espnW.

www.espnW.com

Contacts

Program Executive Director: Tom Farrey
Tom.Farrey@aspeninstitute.org
860.798.0752

Program Coordinator: Risa Isard
Risa.Isard@aspeninstitute.org
202.736.2916