



NEWS RELEASE

Elevating the People Who Shape Youth Sports: The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation and GameChanger Introduce "Most Valuable Coach" Initiative

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As young athletes grow older, many quietly drift away from the sports they once loved. One of the most common reasons for this drop in participation isn't cost, injury or time, but the quality of their experiences with a coach.

Research shows that kids who play for trained coaches have more positive experiences and are far more likely to stay in sport. The way a coach communicates, supports and leads can heavily influence whether a young person feels confident, connected and encouraged, on and off the field.

The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation and **GameChanger** believe that coaches sit at the center of the youth sports experience. Beyond teaching skills, coaches shape confidence, well-being and a sense of belonging, especially at pivotal moments in a young athlete's life. To support youth coaches in this responsibility, The DICK'S Foundation and GameChanger, are joining forces to launch **Most Valuable Coach (MVC)**, an initiative designed to strengthen youth sports by investing in the people who lead them.

"Coaches play one of the most influential roles in a young person's sports experience, and we believe they deserve the same level of support we expect them to give their athletes," said Rick Jordan, VP of The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation. "With Most Valuable Coach, we wanted to raise awareness around the impact coaches have and make it easier for them to access practical, digestible resources that help them show up for their players. We're incredibly fortunate to work alongside trusted partners who bring best-in-class expertise, ensuring coaches are getting the most relevant, credible information possible."



Through MVC, the organizations are expanding access to educational tools, coaching guidance and practical tips for coaches and parents navigating today's youth sports landscape. The initiative focuses on empowering coaches with real-world guidance that prioritizes safe and supportive environments, developmentally appropriate coaching and values driven leadership that supports the whole child.

"At GameChanger, we see every day how much a coach shapes the experience for families, not just in how the game is played, but in how it's remembered," said Rebecca Wasserman, GameChanger VP of Strategy, Operations & Impact. "Most Valuable Coach is about recognizing that influence and giving coaches the support they need to create environments where every young athlete feels seen, supported, and excited to keep playing."

The MVC initiative is also built in collaboration with the **Center for Healing & Justice through Sport**. CHJS builds capacity in individual coaches, deepens impact in organizations and serves as backbone infrastructure for collective action in youth sport. This collaborative approach ensures that the resources are grounded not only in research, but also in lived experience and proven impact.

"Sport can either be a source of harm or a powerful pathway for healing, depending on the quality of the coach. At CHJS, we've seen firsthand that when coaches have science-backed tools, young people feel it. We're proud to bring that to Most Valuable Coach alongside The DICK'S Foundation and GameChanger," said Megan Bartlett, Founder of CHJS.

Today, The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation and GameChanger formally debuted MVC at the **2026 Project Play Summit in Boston**, marking a milestone in The Foundation's and GameChanger's continued commitment to youth sports access. The launch brought together leaders across sports, philanthropy, parenting and youth development to spotlight the important role coaches play in shaping the future of sport and introducing MVC as a resource to elevate and support them.

These resources are designed to meet coaches where they are, delivered in short, easy to digest formats and informed by the real-life voices and experiences of youth coaches. Whether new to the sidelines or years into leading a team, coaches will find practical support they can apply to meet the needs of their athletes.

In addition to launching MVC, The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation continues their broader mission to expand access to sport and break down the barriers young people face in participating. As part of that commitment, The DICK'S Foundation has renewed its partnerships with the following organizations:

- **Every Kid Sports** Every Kid Sports to help cover the cost of youth sports registration fees for kids from income-restricted families nationwide. GameChanger has also partnered with Every Kid Sports to provide free

subscriptions to those same families.

- **Good Sports** to provide equipment to youth in under-resourced communities
- **LISC** to build fields, courts and additional infrastructures in high-need neighborhoods
- **DonorsChoose** to support educators and coaches in equity-focused schools, helping keep kids in the game nationwide

More information on Most Valuable Coach, GameChanger and The DICK'S Foundation can be found at **BeAnMVC.org**, **gc.com** and **sportsmatter.org**