

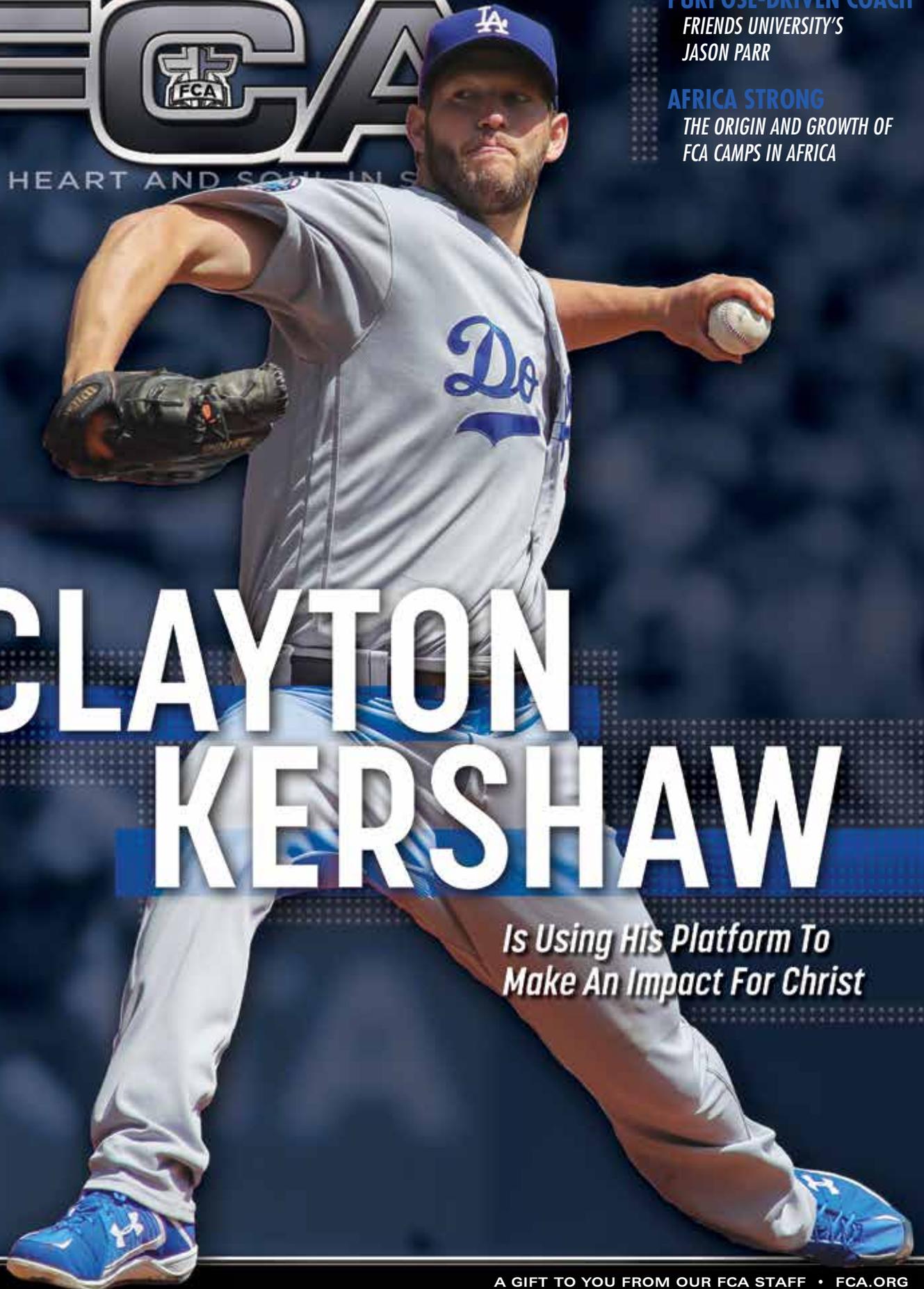
FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES

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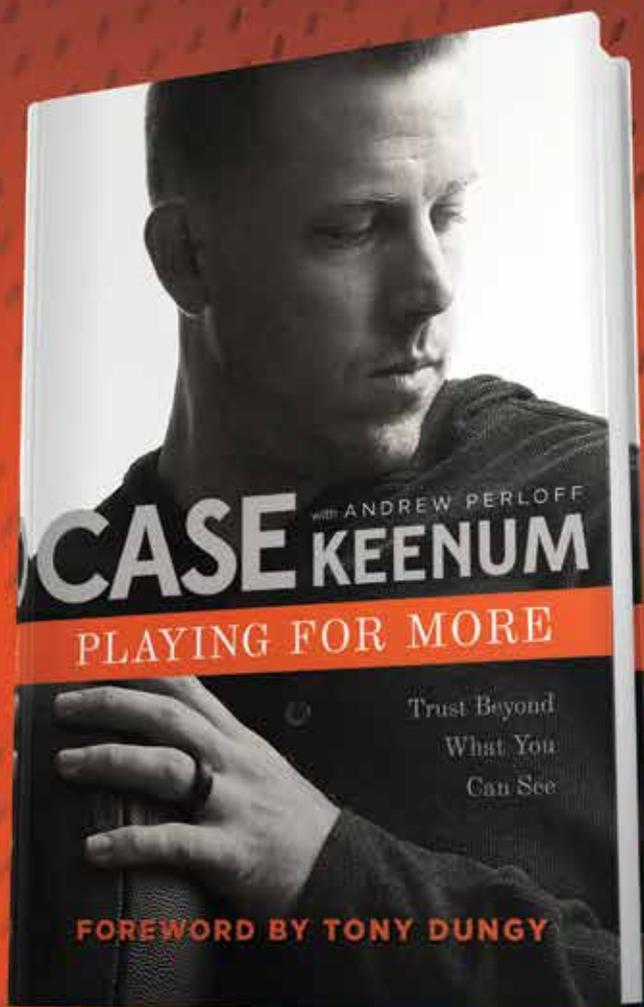
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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD



COVER STORY

THE TIME OF HIS LIFE

CLAYTON KERSHAW'S
INTENTIONALITY WITH TIME
HAS LED TO IMPACT
BEYOND THE DIAMOND.

BY DREW VAN ESSELSTYN

PAGE 8

Nearly five years after its inception in 1954, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes printed and distributed its first publication, *The Christian Athlete*. The small, pamphlet-sized piece created in 1959 served as a way to communicate to those involved with FCA, sharing stories of eternal impact occurring through the ministry.

With time, the publication grew in size and distribution. In 1982, it was renamed to *Sharing the Victory (STV)*. Then, 30 years later in 2012, the publication changed its name to *FCA Magazine* to create greater brand identity and awareness as the official publication of the ministry.

With each change in title, design or frequency, the mission continued to be the same: to share how Christ was working in and through the ministry of FCA by transforming coaches and athletes and those they influence.

Looking forward, as we seek to expand FCA's reach, we recognize how different the communications world is today than it was in the past. With that, we'd like to become even more adaptable to the personal preferences of our readers. So, following this issue, a donor-targeted publication with stories of FCA impact will be published twice per year—in the spring and fall. Additionally, we're excited to say that a variety of channels, including social and digital, will be used to share that great content in new ways; so stay tuned!

With these changes on the horizon, we wanted to thank everyone who has contributed to *The Christian Athlete*, *Sharing the Victory* and *FCA Magazine* over the past 60 years.

By God's grace and sovereignty, lives will continue to be transformed by Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes involved with FCA. And we'll continue to share those stories, just as it says in 1 Chronicles 16:24: "*Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.*"

Nancy Hedrick

Nancy Hedrick
Executive Vice President of Communications and Marketing

ALL ACCESS: PAGE 6

- News and notes, including a look back at past FCA publications
- Minnesota Lynx shooting guard Tanisha Wright steps into the FCA Zone
- LPGA Tour pro Emma Talley answers our 6 Questions

COVER STORY



PURPOSE-DRIVEN COACH

Friends University's
Jason Parr lives to point
others to Christ.

BY CHAD BONHAM

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AFRICA STRONG

The Origin and Growth
of FCA Camps in Africa

BY CHAD BONHAM

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Cover Photo: © Sergio Estrada-USA TODAY Sports

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FCA Vision: To see the world transformed by Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes.

FCA Mission: To lead every coach and athlete into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.

FCA Values: Integrity, Serving, Teamwork, Excellence

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FIGHT, FINISH, FAITH

With FCA Camp season in full swing, it's always a joy to reflect upon the impact it had on me. And it's even more fulfilling to know that similar experiences will take place all around the world, as coaches and athletes converge for a week of inspiration and perspiration, where they'll be poured into athletically and spiritually and will be transformed by the Holy Spirit.

This year's theme, "Strong," is based on 2 Timothy 4:7, which says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful." I believe this theme is one of the best we've ever had in tying our daily spiritual journey to athletic principles through Scripture.

It's so encouraging to see those words, written almost 2,000 years ago, lived out by today's coaches and athletes as they face competition—physical and spiritual—on the races marked out for them.

Like campers are doing this summer, let's take a closer look at the three components of that verse: Fight, Finish and Faith.

Fight. Think about the coaches in your life—past or present—and how they inspired you to compete harder, to push past the pain, to fight.

We're all familiar with "fighting" on the field, but as believers we must also realize there is an ongoing fight against the spiritual powers of evil. Ephesians 6:12 (MEV) says, "For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

We can't fight these battles on our own. But the great news is that we are equipped with God's Spirit to grapple with every spiritual hurdle in our way. We'll be more than conquerors if we fight through the power of His strength.

Finish. We're all given a specific "race" to run as a parent, spouse, coach or athlete. God has called us to finish that race all the way through the line.

In our home, we emphasize giving 100 percent, finishing what you start. We all have a natural tendency to drop out of the race before it's done, especially if it gets hard. Ultimately, it's not how we start, but how we finish that matters. The world is craving people who can end better than they began, who keep pressing toward the finish line, like Paul says in Philippians 3:14: "I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

Faith. Do you truly believe God is with you? That He will help you fight spiritual battles and finish your race? Your faith in God will be the difference when the external voices of discouragement are there, and your internal voices are filled with doubt. Will you remain faithful in those moments, trusting that He will show you the way, so He can be glorified?

Jesus' final words to His followers were to go and make disciples. Those words alone would have motivated anyone, but He knew we would need more than just words, so He sent His Spirit to come and be our strength, encouraging us throughout the race of life.

We ask you to join us in prayer for the more than 100,000 coaches and athletes attending FCA Camps this summer, that they might respond to the gospel and be committed to fighting, finishing and being faithful.

Shane Williamson
 FCA President/CEO



ALL ACCESS

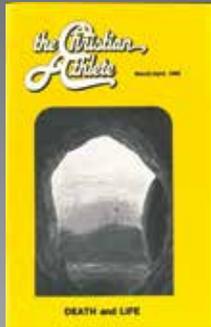
SHARING CHRIST THROUGH FCA

With changes in store for the official publication of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, take a look back at the evolution of FCA's printed piece over the past 60 years. And stay tuned for communication on what's to come!

THE CHRISTIAN ATHLETE 1959-82

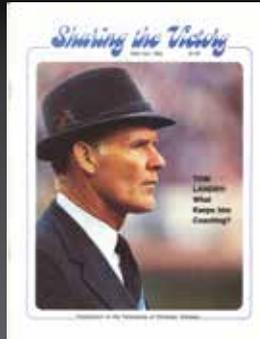


March 1959



March/April 1982

SHARING THE VICTORY (STV) 1982-2012



September/October 1982



July/August 2012

FCA MAGAZINE 2012-18



September/October 2012



July/August 2018

FCAZONE

"The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is very important because it encourages fellowship with other believers and helps maintain the focus of giving God the glory."

*- Tanisha Wright
Minnesota Lynx*



THANKS FROM FCA MAGAZINE!

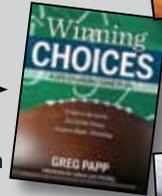
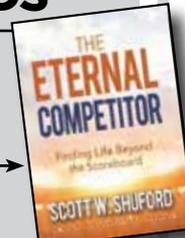
Want your own copy of *Changed* by Sanctus Real or *No Matter What* by Ryan Stevenson? One could be yours by following *FCA Magazine* on Facebook or Twitter during July or August. We will randomly select ten people to receive one of the CDs as a thank-you!



FCA MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS

LITERATURE:

- A captivating narrative that makes both the gospel and God's design for competition readily accessible: *The Eternal Competitor* by Scott W. Shuford
- A book that speaks to the uncertainty of today's world and offers effective solutions to reach across cultural, generational and educational boundaries: *Winning Choices* by Greg Papp
- The compelling account of how Ben Malcolmson, personal assistant to Seattle Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll, discovered that humble obedience leads to a life of faith, hope, and purpose: *Walk On* by Ben Malcolmson with Pattie McCord



TUNES:

- A collection of the popular band's most beloved songs: *I Can Only Imagine - The Very Best of Mercy Me*
- An album that heralds the message that even when circumstances bend towards chaos, light that shines from the inside out cannot be dimmed: *Blackout* by Steffany Gretzinger



FAITH & SPORTS CALENDAR



JULY 2018

- 7-29 Tour de France
- 2-15 Wimbledon
- 17 MLB All-Star Game
- 19-22 British Open

AUGUST 2018

- 2-5 Ricoh Women's British Open
- 9-12 PGA Championship
- 16-22 Little League World Series
- 27 U.S. Open (Tennis) begins

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6 QUESTIONS WITH EMMA TALLEY

LPGA TOUR | @TALLEY_EMMA



- 1) I bring my faith into my golf game by marking my tees with a cross and my golf ball with a Bible verse. I often memorize Bible verses on the course as well.
- 2) Being a Christ-follower means we love God and love other people. I think that is our true mission on this Earth.
- 3) My favorite Bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11 because it reminds me that God has a plan for me and He is with me wherever I go.
- 4) If I didn't play golf professionally I would love to be a kindergarten teacher. I love kids so much!
- 5) One piece of *athletic* advice I'd share with kids is enjoy the process. That is the fun part.
- 6) One piece of *spiritual* advice I'd share with kids is pray first. When I have problems or need advice, oftentimes I run toward friends or family, but I am constantly learning to seek God and pray first instead.

THE TIME OF HIS LIFE

CLAYTON KERSHAW'S INTENTIONALITY WITH TIME HAS LED TO IMPACT BEYOND THE DIAMOND.

BY DREW VAN ESSELSTYN



CLAYTON KERSHAW IS FOREVER MINDFUL OF HIS TIME. IF THE BLOCK SET ASIDE FOR DINNER IN THE LOS ANGELES DODGERS' CLUBHOUSE RUNS TILL 5 O'CLOCK, THAT MAY AS WELL BE SET IN STONE. THE SAME CAN

BE SAID FOR HIS CARDIO AND WEIGHT-ROOM WORKOUTS, STRETCHING ROUTINES, SCOUTING REPORT BREAKDOWNS, AND LONG-TOSS SESSIONS IN THE OUTFIELD.

And that's just a taste of what his "off days" look like, the four days spent between each start. Kershaw, a once-in-a-decade type of pitcher destined for the Hall of Fame, consistently displays a white-hot intensity and seemingly singular focus, which he says comes from a deeper motivation.

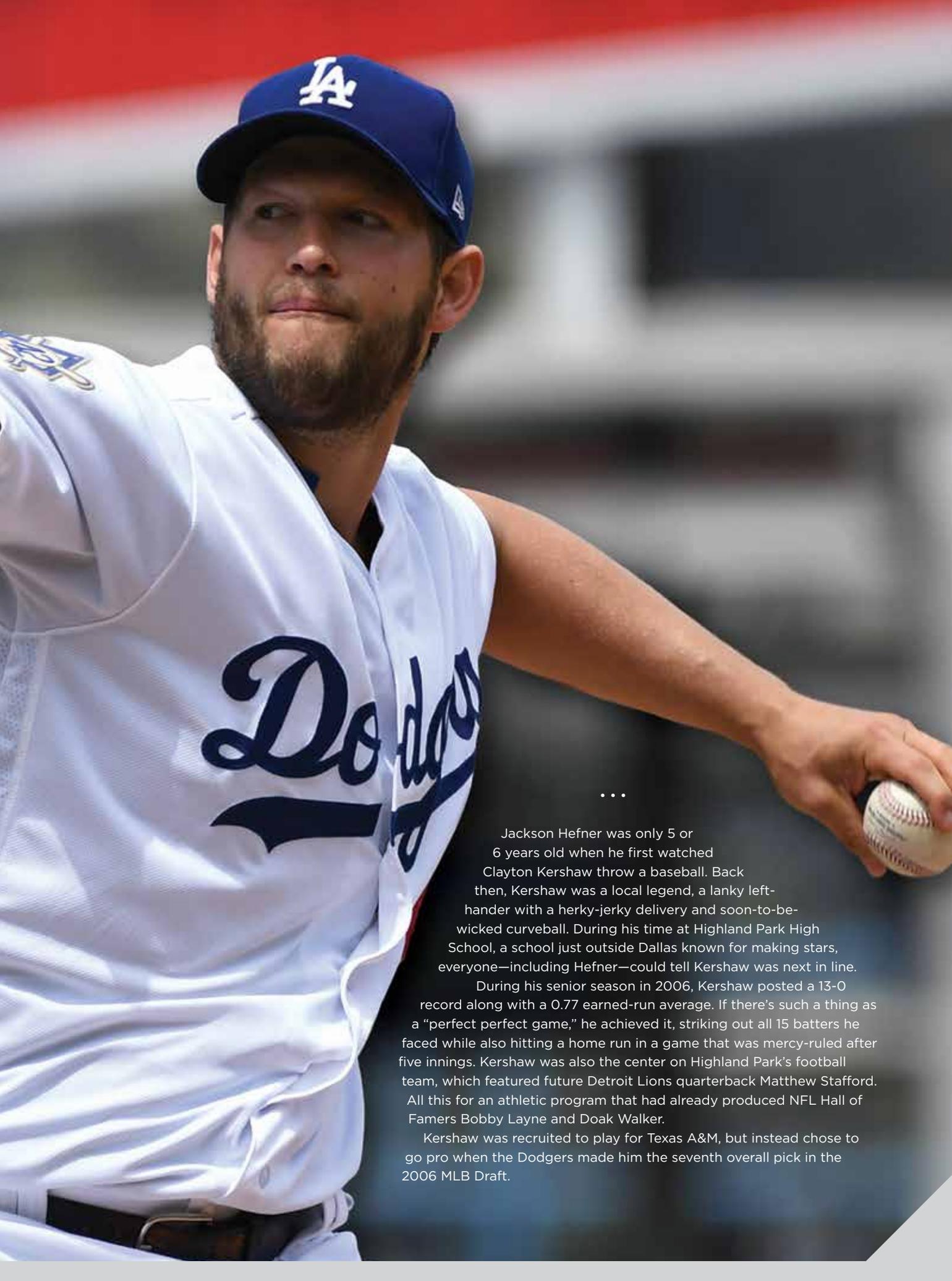
"I didn't do anything to deserve this gift," Kershaw says. "God gave me an ability to throw a baseball. He chose me for a reason, and I want to honor Him with that.

"You can't control the talents He gives you, no doubt about that. But you can control the effort you put forth with those talents."

So, from the spring through the fall each year, Kershaw attacks every waking hour of his life. Given the Dodgers' success in recent years, the fall often stretches into October—or, in some cases, like last year's seven-game World Series, even November.

Because he must exert such a staggering amount of control over his days for (at least) nine months out of the year, you would think he'd be similarly guarded during the offseason when he's back home in Dallas.

Instead, Kershaw opens that time to generously serve others. Time is still precious—a precious gift for him to share.

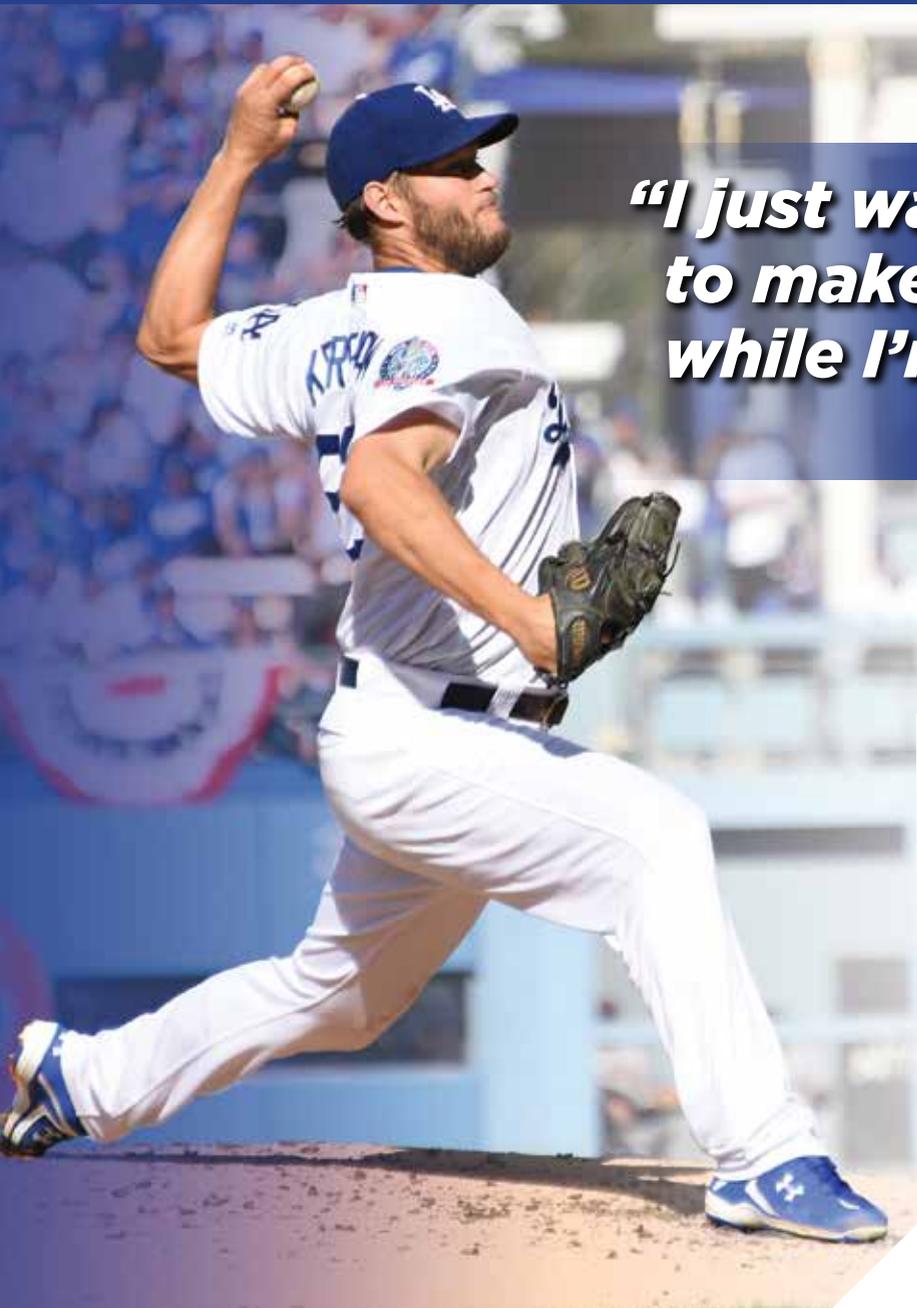


...

Jackson Hefner was only 5 or 6 years old when he first watched Clayton Kershaw throw a baseball. Back then, Kershaw was a local legend, a lanky left-hander with a herky-jerky delivery and soon-to-be-wicked curveball. During his time at Highland Park High School, a school just outside Dallas known for making stars, everyone—including Hefner—could tell Kershaw was next in line.

During his senior season in 2006, Kershaw posted a 13-0 record along with a 0.77 earned-run average. If there's such a thing as a "perfect perfect game," he achieved it, striking out all 15 batters he faced while also hitting a home run in a game that was mercy-ruled after five innings. Kershaw was also the center on Highland Park's football team, which featured future Detroit Lions quarterback Matthew Stafford. All this for an athletic program that had already produced NFL Hall of Famers Bobby Layne and Doak Walker.

Kershaw was recruited to play for Texas A&M, but instead chose to go pro when the Dodgers made him the seventh overall pick in the 2006 MLB Draft.



“I just want to be able to make an impact while I’m here.”
-Clayton Kershaw

It took less than two years for Kershaw to reach the big leagues. In 2011, as a 23-year-old just five years removed from high school, he won the first of his three Cy Young Awards. In 2014, he won his third while also being named National League MVP, becoming the first pitcher to accomplish the rare feat since Bob Gibson won both in 1968.

By that time, Hefner was on the baseball team at Highland Park and also serving as an officer for the school’s FCA Huddle. Kershaw was a fixture in the area every offseason, and Hefner still had that same childlike wonder as

when he’d watch the MLB star in the Highland Park outfield, long-tossing balls straight into a target from 150 feet away.

Then, one day, Hefner got the call. Kershaw wanted to throw a bullpen session, and he needed a catcher.

“You’re not moving your glove, because he’s hitting it at like 92, 93 miles per hour exactly where you set up,” says Hefner, who just finished his freshman year at TCU. “I was sitting there thinking, ‘It can’t get any better than this.’

“And then he threw his curveball. I caught it, sat there for like a second-and-a-half and

thought, ‘That just happened.’ He was laughing a little when I threw it back to him.”

Matthew White, who played catcher for Highland Park and is now a senior at the University of Texas, had a similar experience a couple years earlier. Every pitch Kershaw threw seemed to “teleport” right where White put his glove.

“Oh, it’s ridiculous,” White says. “It’s so pure, so perfect.”

...

Bobby Leidner tells his FCA officers to be ready every winter, and he encourages them to be bold.

Kershaw is visible not only at Highland Park’s baseball field during the offseason, but also around town. He and his wife, Ellen, both graduated from Highland Park. That’s still very much “home,” so they’re often seen at local restaurants, the supermarket, wherever.

Leidner, the school’s Huddle coach for the past five years, has gotten to know Kershaw, but he still knows it means more if one of the students takes the lead to connect with Kershaw about speaking to the Huddle.

It’s become an annual tradition now, taking place anywhere from before Christmas to just after winter break.

“Looking back, I realize the speakers we had when I was in FCA had a big impact on my life,” Kershaw says. “I’m fortunate now to be in a position where high school kids might actually listen to what I have to say. I don’t take that for granted.”

Each speaking session is different for Kershaw, who doesn't have a canned testimony that he rattles off. This past year, with the Dodgers' heartbreaking loss in Game 7 of the World Series fresh on his mind, the topic was dealing with "failure" at the end of an otherwise spectacular run.

That subject struck a chord for "a group of kids who haven't experienced much failure," says Ben Pollard, the FCA area representative who serves Highland Park.

"They win 90 percent of the things they do," he says. "So, for someone who's one of them to come in and talk about how people are watching when you fail as a believer, that showed an amazing level of maturity."

Highland Park's FCA Huddle typically draws 25 to 30 student-athletes. When Kershaw shows up, that number balloons to 100 or more. Leidner does his best to make sure the Huddle officers are prepared to build on that type of momentum.

"You're going to have people who are not necessarily coming to FCA, and you need to do a good job with the outreach portion," Leidner says. "Make sure you have their names and numbers, so you can invite them to our next meeting."

Attendance has spiked in some years. Hefner estimates about 25 percent of the new faces stuck around in the spring of 2017.

"The kids just soak it in," Leidner says. "And [Kershaw] never gives me a look like, 'All right, we need to wrap this up.' He is so willing to just be there and be a part of those kids' lives."

...

Highland Park High School and North Dallas High School are only about three miles apart, but the socioeconomic disparity between the two areas can make that feel like much further.

For this reason, Steven De La Cerda, the head baseball coach at North Dallas, didn't know what to expect when he invited his players to go see Kershaw speak at Highland Park this past January.

"I knew I'd have to play up the Clayton Kershaw thing," De La Cerda says, "because I didn't know if they'd be OK getting out of their comfort zone."

To De La Cerda's surprise, though, about a dozen kids jumped at the opportunity. The North Dallas teenagers, largely unchurched but part of the school's FCA Huddle, were some of the first to arrive that night. They reveled in the game room. They lined up for the complimentary burgers at the In-N-Out food truck. And they secured prime front-row seats well before Kershaw took the stage.

"And then to hear probably the best pitcher in the game talk about how faith is the foundational part of his life in every aspect, that was huge," De La Cerda says. "These are teenagers who are either thinking about baseball or girls, and here's this guy who makes millions of dollars and is really good at what he does, and he doesn't even talk about that."

"He was all about Jesus. That's just reassuring for my boys to hear that. If that's your bedrock, you're going to be OK."

During a Q&A time at the end, De La Cerda was jarred when one of his players asked Kershaw how he throws his signature curveball. Kershaw politely deflected, saying he didn't want to bore the crowd with all the details. But then, as everyone was filing out, Kershaw found De La Cerda and asked him

KERSHAW'S CHALLENGE:

Clayton and Ellen Kershaw established the Kershaw's Challenge foundation in 2011 to serve vulnerable and at-risk children living in Los Angeles, Dallas, Zambia and the Dominican Republic.



THE KERSHAW FAMILY:

Charley, Ellen, Cali Ann and Clayton
at Spring Training 2018 in Arizona.



if he coached the kid who had asked about the curveball. He then detailed the grip, the release point, and even the mechanics that have helped his curveball break from the top of the strike zone to the bottom in fractions of a second, leaving countless hitters befuddled.

“Clayton didn’t have to do that. There were hundreds of kids there waiting to get a picture or an autograph,” De La Cerda says. “He didn’t have to do that, but he made time.”

• • •

As the director of sports programs at Mercy Street, a ministry seeking to impact West Dallas neighborhoods with the gospel, Lee Jackson has worked with his fair share of professional athletes. When he met with Clayton and Ellen to talk about what a baseball camp featuring Kershaw could look like, Jackson was clear about his hopes and expectations.

“I want you to have fun,” Jackson remembers telling Kershaw. “As a professional player, kids don’t always get a chance to meet a guy, especially a genuine guy. Some pro players are there for show and tell. They’re there to kiss babies and laugh and joke and get out of there.”

When the camp came to fruition, Jackson recruited the coaching staff and players from nearby Dallas Baptist University to run the instructional stations for the camp, which freed up Kershaw to work his way to every group of kids.

Kershaw’s foundation, named Kershaw’s Challenge, is now a partner with Mercy Street. In the past five years, the camp has grown from 80 kids to more than 400. It’s turned into another can’t-miss event back home.

When Game 7 of the World Series ended late on Nov. 1, Kershaw was spent. Three days after a Game 5 start, he came back to throw four scoreless innings in a losing effort. But, just a couple days later, he was on a plane to Dallas to be at camp.

“He told me he was tired, but when he got out there with the kids, you couldn’t tell,” Jackson says. “He got his second wind, and he told me it was because he was where he loves to be: in the lives of young folks, sharing the gospel, sharing his life.”

Professional athletes have a lot of requests to share their lives. The team at Kershaw’s Challenge has been particularly adept at selecting places and causes for Clayton and Ellen to serve.

They don’t say yes to everything, but one glance at the foundation’s beneficiaries reveals how generous the Kershaws are with their time, talent and treasure.

“Jesus told us to go to Samaria, Judea and all the other parts of the earth,” Jackson says. “That’s what Clayton is doing. He comes back to his hometown. He does things at the Dream Center in Los Angeles. He does things in Africa and the Dominican Republic.

“He’s doing everything Jesus was saying to do.”

• • •

This summer in particular, those watching Kershaw would say he has to be mindful of time. The time he has left to pitch, especially at the pinnacle of his profession. The time the Dodgers have to make a run at an elusive world championship. The time he has left on his contract, and what sort of investment of time (and dollars) he will receive from the Dodgers and others.

In each of those scenarios, time seems limited. Kershaw chooses to see it from a more eternal perspective.

“If you have these strict, rigid ideas in your head of what life can look like in the future, you might not see what God has prepared for you,” he says. “I don’t know what next year holds. I don’t know what the next 10 years hold. I’m thankful for the past 10 years I got to play this game.

“I just want to be able to make an impact while I’m here.”

FCA

TIME AND TALENT

BY SARAH RENNICKE

READY:

"This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."
– Romans 13:11

SET:

Los Angeles Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw tackles his time intentionally, whether with his in-season regimen or with an openness to serve the needs of others in the offseason. He recognizes one of his greatest abilities—to snap his famous curveball across the plate and baffle hitters—is not his final achievement, but a vessel to gain glory for the Giver of his arm.

It's a gift, pure and simple.

"I didn't do anything to deserve this gift," Kershaw says. "God gave me an ability to throw a baseball. He chose me for a reason, and I want to honor Him with that."

Kershaw finds time to honor God through his platform as one of the most well-known pitchers of this generation, whether that's with local high school FCA Huddles or his foundation, Kershaw's Challenge. Giving his life to serve requires an effort that he gives gladly, and part of Kershaw's path to such success has been allowing God to lead. Where he's ended up, well, that's

where Kershaw steps into the work and determines, much like the parable of the servant given five talents, what he will do with what's been set before him.

"You can't control the talents He gives you, no doubt about that. But you can control the effort you put forth with them," Kershaw says.

Time. We can get caught up in the illusion that we have all the time in the world, that we'll simply exist forever. While that is true once we reach Heaven, right now, our humanity is restrained, and God has counted each of our days. Jesus Himself was limited to 33 years on earth to do His Father's will, and He made sure each conversation and action had intentionality. If Jesus made the most of what He was allotted, how can we not do the same?

What will you do with the time you've been given? What about your gifts and talents? How will you use them to build others up and bring honor to God?

We can hoard our time, spending it however we wish, or we can pour it out and let it spread into the hearts of those around us.

Hold the treasure of time loosely in your hand. Let God direct where you spend it and how it's used for Kingdom impact. As each day draws us closer to Jesus' return, time is everything.

Let's use it well.



GO:

- Are there areas in your life where you should be spending more focused, intentional time?
- What talents has God given you, and what will you do with the time you've been given to use them?
- Ask God to reveal to you how you can best use your time to serve others.

WORKOUT:

Ecclesiastes 3:1
Psalm 90:12
Matthew 25:14-30

OVERTIME:

Father God, You give me so much. Nothing that I have has been earned on my own accord; it's been given to me as a gift. All I have is Yours. I pray that I may use my talents to tell the world about You and Your gift of salvation, recognizing that every second on this earth counts. May I use my time wisely, and use it well. Amen.



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STEPHANIE SANDERS

VILLANOVA
SOFTBALL



"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." - Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

Stephanie Sanders was born into a coaching family. Her father, Doug, coached multiple teams in Lima, Ohio, and two of her grandparents also coached baseball teams. Growing up in that competitive environment, Sanders followed her father and grandparents by excelling as a softball player before becoming a coach. At Bath High, Sanders' FCA Huddle showed her how exemplary coaches and athletes can have an impact far greater than wins and losses.

"I know how much better of a person my coaches made me."

FCA: What encouraged you to become a coach?

SS: The older I got in college, the more I realized how influential coaches are, and how I had been surrounded by great coaches. It really turned me onto the fact that I would love to be a coach who, yes, can make someone a better softball player, but who can also reach someone by teaching them more about life. I know how much better of a person my coaches made me.

FCA: Why is Psalm 119:105 your favorite Bible verse?

SS: I often question myself and my life's journey. I question whether I'm doing the right things or if I'm where I need to be. Moving to Philadelphia two years ago has been such a test. I moved here without knowing a soul, away from all my friends and family. I've leaned on this verse because it reminds me that Jesus is guiding me. If I keep leaning on Him and hearing Him, praying to Him and thanking Him, I know I'm going where I need to go.

FCA: Why do you value FCA?

SS: I had a high school teacher, Mark Shine, who worked with FCA and helped run our Huddle. It was really important to me, as an athlete who was somewhat

of a leader, to be present there. It's hard as an athlete because you start to identify yourself as just that, but it was important to me to not just be an athlete. Going to FCA brought me back down to earth and let me lean on Jesus. I wanted my faith to drive me.

In my freshman year at Michigan State, at my first practice, I broke my tibia and fibula and dislocated my ankle while sliding into a base. I struggled and felt loss. A teammate told me about Athletes in Action. I needed that. Andrea Gasso, our assistant coach, ran our team Bible study. That all got me through my freshman year. It made me realize Jesus loves me, and softball isn't what makes me feel whole.

FCA: How do you share your faith with your team?

SS: Being at Villanova, it's made it easier to be open about my faith. We go on a team retreat twice a year. In those settings, it's been easier for me to talk to them. It's led me to conversations where I've had girls come to me and ask me things. I'm honest with them, and I just share my story with them.

FCA: What do you hope your players say about you?

SS: I hope I'm one of those coaches who they could rely on. I hope whenever they need something—whether it's helping them look at their swing or sitting down over coffee and talking about whatever is going on in their life—they see me as a resource to help them, and they trust me. They do understand where I stand with my faith. They know that door is always open.

FCA

Courtesy of Jerry Millweil and Dave Evans

ABOUT THE COACH:

HOMETOWN: Lima, Ohio

COACHING CAREER:

- Villanova, Assistant Coach (2016-Present)
- Saginaw Valley State, Assistant Coach (2015-16)

ATHLETIC CAREER:

- Michigan State (2011-15)

FCA STAFF QUOTE:

"Stephanie Sanders exudes joy! Every summer, she comes back to her hometown of Lima, Ohio, to encourage hundreds of high school students at FCA's Legends of Northwest Ohio Banquet. She shares how her faith journey is going in a real and positive way and leaves students with hope for a good future through the Lord."

- Andy Lynch, FCA Area Representative
Lima, Ohio



COURTNEY BERGUM

WINONA STATE
GOLF

HEART OF AN ATHLETE®

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

In seventh grade, Courtney Bergum went from casual golf observer to player. Her father, John, introduced her to the sport while also raising her to love Jesus Christ. Today, Bergum is an influential member in Winona State's FCA Huddle as she shares her faith with fellow student-athletes. She is pursuing a career in physical and health education, and she plans to help younger athletes by incorporating Scripture into her teaching.



"... I'm not a golfer first; I'm a child of God."

FCA: Who introduced you to FCA?

CB: My sister, Elizabeth, was a Huddle leader as a high school senior when I was freshman. She kind of dragged me to a couple meetings in the morning before school, and I fell in love with Christ even more through the people there.

I've always looked up to my sister as a role model; she cared about me enough to tell me, "This is something you should be doing." Even on the mornings I didn't want to go, I was thankful she took me. FCA definitely helped us grow closer.

FCA: When did your faith become your own?

CB: As high school juniors, my best friend, Kellyn Lamore, and I took over the Huddle and brought it to the forefront in our school. We made the commitment together to dedicate our lives to Christ and show other people that we were following Him.

Last summer, I joined a couple of girls from Winona State at the Athletes in Action Ultimate Training Camp in Colorado. That helped me refocus. After my sophomore year, I was just so focused on being a really good golfer that I fell into some traps of not getting into Scripture or talking to people about God. When we went to the camp, it helped me realize I'm not a golfer first; I'm a child of God. I'm playing because He's given me the ability to play and spread His Word.

FCA: Why is FCA important to you?

CB: We gather as athletes from every different sport, and we're all going through the same things, such as schoolwork or missing classes for your sport. Having

that time of fellowship together, being able to not only build relationships with each other but push each other further in our relationships with Christ—I think it's important to have those people because it's easy for athletes to get caught up in the busyness of our schedules.

You could be doing homework on a Wednesday night instead of worshipping the Lord (at FCA Huddle). I like to go to kind of reevaluate where I'm at, individually as well as with my team. As a child of God, in His eyes it doesn't matter if we win or lose, but you want to build that relationship with Him.

FCA: How are you preparing for your senior season?

CB: This summer, I'm going to be out on the golf course every day. I'll work hard on the physical game while continuing to push myself spiritually. I'll be helping out with FCA Camp in Winona again this summer, just trying to make a difference in other people's lives. Next year, I hope to help incoming teammates by giving them resources for anything they need and bringing them to FCA to create that relationship with other athletes, since I've found that so uplifting.

FCA

ABOUT THE ATHLETE:

HOMETOWN:
Holmen, Wisconsin

CLASS:
Junior

- NOTES:**
- NSIC All-Academic Team (2017, 2018)
 - MVC Sarah Mullenbach Award winner (2014)
 - MVC Medalist and Golfer of the Year (2014)

FCA STAFF QUOTE:
"Courtney has been a strong leader with the Winona State FCA Huddle, and I have seen her faith grow in the process. She served as a Huddle Leader at our local youth camp last summer and did an outstanding job connecting with the youth."

- James Bolin, FCA Area Director
Rochester, Minnesota



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ATHLETES**
fca.org

**“GOD GAVE ME
AN ABILITY TO
THROW A BASEBALL.
HE CHOSE ME
FOR A REASON,
AND I WANT TO
HONOR HIM
WITH THAT.”**

CLAYTON KERSHAW





Dodgers
27

Dodgers

27

PURPOSE-DRIVEN COACH

FRIENDS UNIVERSITY
COACH JASON PARR
LIVES TO POINT
OTHERS TO CHRIST

BY CHAD BONHAM



JASON PARR THOUGHT HE WAS DONE COACHING. AT THE END OF THE 2016 ACADEMIC YEAR, AFTER A DECADE OF IMPACTING ENTIRE STUDENT BODIES ACROSS A FEW DIFFERENT STATES THROUGH CROSS COUNTRY, TRACK AND FIELD, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS MINISTRY, HE WAS READY TO FOCUS ON TEACHING, AND HE ALSO WANTED TO PURSUE HIS OWN ATHLETIC GOALS AS A DISTANCE RUNNER FOR FCA ENDURANCE.

In Wichita, Kansas, he was all set to begin his new job as a physical education teacher at Maize South Elementary School. But then tragedy struck. The high school's cross country coach tragically died of a heart attack following a preseason practice.

A few days later, without even asking if Parr was interested, the school's superintendent scheduled an interview with him.

"I wasn't even looking to get back into coaching," Parr said, "but I went to the interview anyway. Afterwards, they told me they would decide in two weeks.

"They ended up calling me 10 minutes later to offer me the job."

In that moment, Parr surrendered the situation to God. He knew God already had everything planned out, and soon he accepted the position.

Just like all of his previous stops, Parr hit the ground running by starting an FCA Huddle. There were 10 kids at the first meeting. That number quickly swelled to more than 80.

"We were changing the hallways," Parr said. "It was life-changing. That's why FCA has had such an impact on my life. I've seen it change kids' lives."

Parr also sparked a new attitude in the cross country program. In just a few weeks, the roster doubled from 32 to 64 athletes. That season, both the boys and girls teams won the 5A state championship for the first time in school history, and the boys and girls track teams finished as state runners-up.

"He was like the Pied Piper," said Curtis Klein, athletic director at Maize South. "Those kids almost instantly bought into him as a coach and as a person and how he led his life. He was infectious. The kids would do anything for him; they'd run as hard as they could."

Former Maize South cross country athlete Graycee Meyer lived that reality firsthand.

"I've had a lot of different coaches, but there is something truly special about Coach Parr," she said. "He invests not only his vast running knowledge into his athletes, but also a spiritual factor that I had never before experienced. His No. 1 priority was making sure we knew we had a God who loved us, and we owed all the glory to Him. This changed the dynamic of our team tremendously."

Parr's accomplishments at Maize South weren't a surprise to anyone who had followed his career. At previous stops in Kansas City, Missouri, and Lexington, Kentucky, he used a similar blueprint for success in both coaching and ministry.

However, some might be surprised to learn of the myriad events that occurred prior to Parr's professional career. A miraculous physical healing, an improbable discovery of athletic talent, and a life-changing spiritual awakening are all pieces of the story of a man who has been an inspiration and motivator to so many.

...

Parr was born and raised in Great Bend, Kansas, a humble Midwestern town a couple hours northwest of Wichita, but his upbringing was anything but ordinary. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth. Doctors said he would never walk or talk, and he would be confined to a wheelchair for his entire life.

Remarkably, Parr's grandfather, Harlan Parr, wasn't discouraged. Every week at First Assembly of God Church in Great Bend, Harlan took Parr from the nursery and brought him down to the altar during prayer time.

One night, when Jason was three years old, Grandpa Parr again took him into the sanctuary for prayer during a revival service. Afterwards, he was convinced his grandson had been healed. The evidence wasn't immediate, but Jason eventually defied the experts by walking and talking.

"We all wonder why we go through what we go through, and why we experience this or that," Parr said. "We ask the 'why' questions. I don't know why I got healed, and other people don't. That's a hard question to answer. But I always tell people God wants to

work through them, no matter where they're at."

Although Parr's cerebral palsy was miraculously gone, other problems were just beginning. His father was virtually non-existent for the first nine years of his life, which led to his parents' divorce and forced Parr into numerous homes throughout elementary school.

"My life was a mess," he said. "Our home was broken. I was in trouble all the time. I was constantly on probation. I wanted to do whatever I wanted to do. I'd stay out late. I'd get into fights. I was failing my classes. I was making my teachers' lives miserable."

It all came to a head in fourth grade. After getting in trouble for vandalism and breaking and entering, which resulted in more than 1,000 hours of community service, the local police intervened in a last-ditch effort to set the troubled pre-teen straight.

They put Parr in a squad car and drove him to a juvenile center, threatening to lock him up in a nine-by-nine cell.

"I was scared," Parr said. "That was a pivotal moment for me. I realized that's not who I wanted to be."

When he returned to school, the physical education teacher, Tracy Thessa, informed him they were running the mile for fitness testing. Parr, as usual, didn't want to participate.

"Just give it a try," Coach Thessa prodded.

When he was finished, no one was quite sure what had just happened.

"Do you understand how fast you just ran?" Coach Thessa asked.

"No," Parr said.

"You just ran a 5:36 mile."

"Is that good?"

As a fourth-grader, Parr had beaten not only his own peers, but all the fifth- and sixth-graders as well.

Coach Thessa handed him a flyer for an AAU summer track program. Parr had his typical excuses (no money, no ride, no shoes) for why he couldn't do it, but she promised to take care of all that, as long as he promised to show up. Parr still hasn't forgotten when she picked him up the first day and handed him a shoebox with a pair of brand-new blue Reebok running shoes.

"Everything changed for me after that," Parr said. "I got more focused. I showed up to practice every day. She quit picking me up, because I fell in love

with running and got there on my own. It was freeing. It was liberating. I didn't feel strapped down. I didn't feel like I was going to disappoint anyone."

Parr's athletic career took off from there. In eighth grade, he met coach Jack Bowman, who invited him to run with the high school kids.

"He's the foundational piece to why I do what I do today," Parr said. "He bought me my first brand-new pair of track spikes. They were black and gold. He showed me what a father was like. He loved me. He never judged me. I always wanted to do my best for this man. It's because of him that I coach today."

• • •

Parr had experienced physical healing and had discovered his athletic gifts, but he still lacked a sense of spiritual awareness.

The final piece of the puzzle fell into place during his junior year at Great Bend High School. Coming full circle, one night at First Assembly of God, Parr went down to the altar and realized he was broken. A man he'd never met before came down and started praying for him.

"Jason, do you understand what God is about to do in your life?" the man asked. "Do you have any idea where He's about to take you?"

Parr was confused. He didn't understand what the man was saying.

"You're going to do great things," he said.

Parr thought the man was crazy, but that didn't stop him from making the most important decision of his life. He surrendered his heart to Christ that night, sparking a transformation that continued throughout his remaining time in high school.

Parr caught fire. He started an FCA Huddle his senior year and served as president.

"I knew what Christ was doing in me, and I wanted to share that with my teammates and the other students," he said.

He also had a strong desire to continue his athletic career in college, but his teachers and counselors had told him college wasn't a realistic opportunity, and he should instead opt for a vocational school.

"I was told I wasn't smart enough," Parr said.

But, thanks to help and encouragement from his girlfriend (and future wife), Rebecca, Parr competed first at Barton County Community College in Great Bend (where he won a national championship) and then at Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri.

"At Evangel, I learned to integrate my faith with everything," Parr said. "I learned to not be scared to promote Christ in a public school, to not be afraid of what people were going to say."

• • •



Jason Parr was named Head Cross Country and Assistant Track & Field Coach at Friends University in 2017.

At his first job, Parr took that fearless, bold attitude to Park Hill High School in Kansas City, where he made good on his promise to God to immediately start an FCA Huddle.

"My athletic director wasn't for it. He didn't believe in it," Parr said. "I didn't go down without a fight."

Parr found a group of five kids who were already meeting as part of a Christian club. He encouraged those students to launch and lead FCA. The next week, there were 20 students. The week after that, there were 30 students. The athletic director was nervous, but Parr remained resolute. Unflinchingly, he told the athletic director they'd need

the auditorium the following week because “we’re going to have 60 kids show up.”

Parr was wrong. Seventy-five kids attended.

Three years later, Parr organized the school’s first Fields of Faith, a student-led event where 700 students attended, 34 of whom accepted Christ. The following week, seven of those 34 kids were baptized.

“That’s when I knew the power of what FCA had brought to the entire community of Kansas City,” Parr said. “That’s what FCA is about— influencing students for Christ and making Him known through all that we do.”

By the time his seven-year tenure at Park Hill had ended, more than 200 kids were regularly showing up for the Wednesday morning FCA meetings.

Tari Garner, the head track coach when Parr first arrived, immediately knew there was something special about the enthusiastic newcomer.

“He was on fire to get involved,” Garner said. “His energy was contagious. He impacted our entire program because of his passion for the sport and his love of God and his willingness to share that with kids through FCA. So many kids followed him and became a part of FCA. That spilled over into all of our programs at Park Hill.”

...

In 2014, Rebecca’s career as a pediatric dentist led to an opportunity in Lexington, Kentucky. Parr didn’t immediately land a full-time job, but he started working as a substitute teacher at The Academy For Leadership At Millcreek, a school that serves three housing authorities with students who come from challenging circumstances.

Parr was determined to not let his part-time role prevent him from having a full-sized impact.

“When he was in the building, he brought this joy and peace,” said Greg Ross, the school’s principal. “He was a ray of sunshine for our school. Our kids fell in love with him. They called him ‘Super Sub.’ They thought he was like a superhero.”

The following year, in a no-brainer

decision, Ross offered Parr the physical education teacher position. Parr jumped into action.

First, he brought back the presidential fitness program. Then, he started a cross country team. He also started a boys lunch group every Friday, where his goal was to mentor the most poorly behaving kids using Scripture-based material from legendary basketball coach John Wooden.

“Jason went from having six kids to having every male student in the



In addition to his coaching career, Jason Parr is an endurance athlete representing Team FCA.

fifth grade attending his lunch group,” Ross said. “The demeanor of these kids changed. It’s the most amazing thing I’ve ever seen, and I’ve been in education for more than 20 years.”

Parr organized a screening of the film *Woodlawn* where 150 students and their families attended. At the end of the night, nearly 90 students gave their hearts to Christ.

At the end of only his second year, another opportunity for Rebecca brought Parr and his two young daughters back to Kansas. Ross said the moment he learned Parr was leaving was “one of the worst days” of his

professional career.

“You can’t replace what Coach Parr brought to us,” he said. “Those kinds of people are angels on earth. Jason is just an unreal human being. I hate that I don’t have him in my life on a daily basis. He’s probably the most impactful man I’ve ever been around. Jason has the ability to change an atmosphere, no matter who he’s dealing with—white, black, rich, poor. People literally loved that man, and it’s because He was truly a representation of Christ.”

...

After his brief nine-month stint at Maize South High School, Parr accepted an offer to be the head cross country and assistant track and field coach at Friends University in Wichita. In his first year at the NAIA school, he took a program not traditionally known for cross country and lifted the women’s team to a national ranking.

Kelly Thorne, Central Kansas FCA Area Director, first met Parr when he took the job at Maize South, and she has high praise for the popular coach.

“I’ve been doing this for 12 years, and I’ve experienced FCA in 25 states,” she said. “Jason is hands down the most influential coach I’ve ever been around. He has crazy energy and just leaks Jesus everywhere. He’s always sharing the gospel, and he’s never afraid to take a stand for the Lord.”

People often ask Parr how he’s been able to accomplish so much through FCA on such a wide array of public school campuses. In response, he often recites Matthew 10:32-33: “*Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.*”

“That verse haunts me,” Parr said. “It has been the building block, the foundational piece for why I do ministry. Days are lost when we’re not intentional about what we should have been doing because we were caught up chasing the prize of being victorious and winning. It rips my heart to know that we have this platform, but we don’t live up to it. That used to be me, but now I just want to live for Christ every day.”

FCA



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BRITTANY WILSON

Huddle Member
Denver, CO

FAVORITE BIBLICAL STORY: “The story of Daniel in the lion’s den (Daniel 6) because it reminds me to remain steadfast in my faith and relationship with God, no matter my circumstances.”

BEST THING ABOUT FCA: “Through the help and influence of FCA and its leaders, I committed my life fully to Christ Jesus. FCA has changed my life and continues to do so through the relationships I’ve made.”

BEST SPIRITUAL ADVICE: “Identify yourself through Christ, not sports or anything in this world, because He is forever and everything else is fleeting.”

I FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE: “He saved me and gave me life, so I want to live for Him.”

FAVES

Romans 5:3-4, soccer, **breakfast**, *Finding Nemo*, **hiking**, fall



DAN TAYLOR

Huddle Coach
Edmonds, WA

FAVORITE BIBLICAL STORY: “The story of Joseph in Genesis 37. He was a great role model of mental toughness, resilience, consistency and a strong work ethic, which are great traits for athletes and coaches to pursue.”

BEST THING ABOUT FCA: “The ability to be able to use sport as an avenue to share the gospel has been one of the most rewarding opportunities in my life as a believer.”

I FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE: “He is the author and finisher of my faith. He is the lover of my soul, my true life coach. Without Him, I am nothing, and I can do nothing.”

FAVES

Romans 8:38-39, basketball, **barbecue ribs**, reading, **summer**



DANIELA TESCH

Area Representative
Cypress, TX

FAVORITE BIBLICAL STORY: “The story of the adulterous Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) because it displays Jesus’ unimaginable grace at our worst.”

BEST THING ABOUT FCA: “Getting to see evidence of God’s mercy and grace through FCA has drawn me more and more to my knees and to dependence on Him.”

I FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE: “He’s shown me over and over again through His sovereignty, power and love that He really is the giver of life and the only thing I can look to.”

FAVES

2 Corinthians 12:9-10, volleyball, **waffles**, wakeboarding, **fall**



KEVIN KAVANAUGH

Huddle Leader
Brunswick, GA

FAVORITE BIBLICAL STORY: “The story of Gideon (Judges 6-8) because God always takes the smallest, weakest and outnumbered, and accomplishes great things with them.”

BEST THING ABOUT FCA: “My wife and I both accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior at an FCA Coaches Camp at Black Mountain (N.C.) on June 26, 1996. He changed our lives, the lives of our children, and changed our whole family dynamic for His glory.”

I FOLLOW JESUS BECAUSE: “He took away my 24-year drinking addiction and changed my heart that was focused on self-gratification and softened it to focus on love, servanthood, and giving Him glory!”

FAVES

Micah 7:7-8, rugby, **breakfast**, Wrigley Field, **fall**



MINISTRY MOMENTS & PRAYER REQUESTS FROM THE FIELD



SOUTHWEST

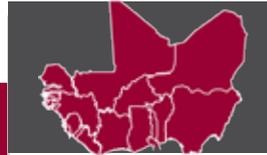
FIELD VP: **DREW BEARD**
D Beard@FCA.ORG

Last winter, Northwest Louisiana FCA hosted Tim Tebow at Independence Stadium where he shared the gospel with more than 8,000 coaches, student-athletes and their communities. His message resonated and spoke to the hearts of many who attended. More than 800 people made the decision to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior, and 215 of those were first-time decisions!



PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. For a healthy ministry team that serves out of the overflow of their relationship with Jesus.
2. That God will call someone to serve as the New Orleans Multi-Area Director.
3. Continued focus for our team to serve and minister to the heart of coaches and athletes!



WEST AFRICA

REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR: **MIKE DIMARIA**

Last month, our first Africa Capacity Conference was hosted in Accra, Ghana. Twenty-three African leaders from 14 countries, along with seven U.S. staff, joined together for sports ministry training and to share local best practices. These leaders will now expand their ministry efforts to serve more coaches and athletes across their nations.



PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. For greater ministry impact as we reach out to coaches and athletes across Africa.
2. That God would bring the right people on board as International Sports Partners.
3. For God to open doors as we bring the good news of Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes into new countries.



SOUTHEAST COASTAL

FIELD VP: **DICKY CLARK**
D Clark@FCA.ORG

We recently hosted a successful conference in Atlanta for FCA staff working in college ministry, and we held an FCA breakfast at the Georgia Athletic Directors Conference in Savannah for 75 athletic directors. And, this winter, summertime FCA campers will reconvene at our annual "recharge" camps held during Christmas break in Georgia and Florida.



PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. For the thousands of campers this summer who will learn how to finish STRONG.
2. That our FCA Huddles will be more impactful than ever this school year.
3. For the person God has already chosen to be selected as the new VP of Field Ministry for Florida.



BRAZIL

REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR: **TOM JOYNER**

Earlier this year, we had the pleasure of hosting three couples from the Brazil Global Region at our International Capacity Conference and FCA Real Time staff gathering. Also, this summer we have four trips planned to São Paulo and Curitiba to lead trainings in 3Dimensional Coaches/ Global Sport Chaplaincy clinics, various sports camps and power camps.



PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. For God's favor as we lead sports camps and coaches clinics with Brazilian sports coalitions.
2. For God to open the hearts of Brazilian coaches and athletes to grow in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. For God to send many coaches and athletes to "Go."



AFRICA STRONG

The Origin and Growth of FCA Camps in Africa

BY CHAD BONHAM



ON AUGUST 14, 2017, MASSIVE MUDSLIDES NEAR SIERRA LEONE'S CAPITAL CITY OF FREETOWN CAUSED TRAGEDY ON A DEVASTATING SCALE FOR THE WEST AFRICAN COUNTRY. MORE THAN A THOUSAND PEOPLE DIED, WHILE ANOTHER 3,000 WERE LEFT HOMELESS.

Yatta Samura, a 20-year sports ministry veteran who had recently been named FCA Director in Sierra Leone, witnessed the devastation firsthand. He knew he had to jump into action.

While delivering food supplies to a displacement camp, Samura and some of his ministry colleagues noticed a teenage girl sitting alone, crying. Together, they went over to encourage her and pray for her. But long after Samura returned home, he couldn't shake the image of that 16-year-old girl—nor the countless other children in his country whose lives had been turned upside down.

Four months later, when his dream of hosting the region's first FCA Camp came to fruition, Samura made sure that girl (along with many other kids affected by the mudslides) could attend.

"I deliberately decided to get some of those children into the camp," Samura said. "I just wanted to give them encouragement, love and acceptance."

Of the 183 campers in attendance, that teenage girl was one of the friendliest and most popular. And more importantly, she made a life-changing decision during the three-day event.

"She was one of the 23 campers who gave their lives to Christ," Samura said. "Yes, she and the others made friends and learned to play sports, but most importantly they were impacted by the gospel."

...

Three years earlier, the idea of a wildly successful sports camp in Sierra Leone wasn't even on the radar. Sure, FCA International had been steadily expanding throughout Africa since 2013, with active ministry taking place in

Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, but it took until 2017 for the FCA Camp concept to take root.

Samura was working for a separate ministry called Sports Life International when he reached out to FCA via email, inquiring about assistance. Up to that point, he had been operating with virtually zero outside support. Soon, Vincent Asamoah, FCA Global Regional Coordinator for West Africa, and Silas Mullis, FCA Director of International Field Support, made the trip to Sierra Leone to see what Samura was doing.

That trip opened up a larger conversation about pioneering FCA Camps in West Africa. By the summer of 2017, six African leaders visited FCA's Support Center in Kansas City to put the wheels in motion, and Samura found himself outlining his vision on a whiteboard.

"I was so inspired as he drew up his camp plan," said Dan Britton, FCA Executive Director of International Ministry. "His vision was so clear. It was so big. When he drew it up on the whiteboard, you could just feel that it was going to happen."

Samura then attended an FCA Leadership Camp in Jackson, Mississippi, where he met FCA Multi-Area Director Kiel Higginbotham, who encouraged Samura to "watch us run this camp from a bird's-eye view, and I'll tell you why we do each of these things."

Samura soaked up everything he could.

"I wanted to see a camp in action," he said. "Kiel showed me everything I needed to know about sports camps. I came back with a vision to start doing camps in my home country."

Samura had held sports camps in Sierra Leone before, "but it was not like the FCA Camps. They're more organized and more constructive."

One specific idea: Use volunteers as Huddle Leaders.

"That was a big change for him," Britton said. "He realized he needed to get a good group of volunteers. He needed to develop a camp team to help carry the vision with him. He made sure he got the right people to help run the camp with him, and he trained those leaders before doing a camp, and there was great impact as a result of that dedication."



Higginbotham had long had a desire to support FCA's global efforts, so the timing of him meeting Samura was providential. During his week-long mentoring session, he wanted to show Samura that camps have a very focused vision to take student leaders and stretch them in their faith and send them back encouraged, equipped and ready to impact their campus for Christ.

"For Yatta, that meant taking local leaders who have influence and giving them tracks to run on," Higginbotham said.

But the backbone of all of it, he continued, was the relational connections forged during the week.

"We're brothers now," he said. "The personal relationship is the biggest part of it. We worked hard during the week we were together, but it was such a joy for our entire staff to get to know and fellowship with Yatta. As a result, our Mississippi staff even rallied around him to help financially fund his first camp. Without us spending a week getting to know each other and developing a new friendship, I'm not sure that happens."

Higginbotham hopes his relationship with Samura will serve as an example for other FCA leaders moving forward. Britton agrees.

"We work hard to connect with people when they come to the country," he said, "but we don't want to just sit them in a classroom and be trained. We want to send them out so they can walk with someone to see it firsthand."

• • •

Samura's first FCA Camp took place in December 2017. It featured competitive sports like soccer, volleyball, and track and field, along with several team-building activities and ministry time for the campers to hear the gospel.

The camp was a smashing success. Samura has a ton of contacts from his time spent working in the communities and schools, so many folks wanted to be a part of it. Unfortunately, though, limited finances placed a cap on the number of campers who could attend.

"We should have had more campers come," Samura said. "We had to stop inviting people. In the future, if we have the resources, we'll have the opportunity to reach more people."

Britton was not surprised when he heard how popular Samura's first camp had been. After all, he'd been there

to witness Samura's inspiring whiteboard presentation in Kansas City.

"When I heard Yatta's vision and how he was going to take his time to get the right people together and do his own training, I knew he realized this wasn't just an event," Britton said. "This wasn't just going back and trying to do a camp and seeing if it worked. He saw this as a significant ministry strategy for his country. He was going to make sure all of the pieces were put together before trying to accomplish it. I knew something significant was going to happen just because of Yatta's intentionality."

It also helped, Britton added, that Samura has been doing sports ministry since 1998.

"He's a veteran," he said. "He's not a brand new guy. He has a lot of relationships, and he leveraged them. But the camp concept was something brand new for his country. People were intrigued. Was it an overnight success? I'd think it was more like a 20-year success."

Also in December, FCA West Africa held a three-day softball camp in Ghana. It was led by Asamoah, who learned about softball while attending Baylor University and brought the sport back to his home country as a unique approach to his ministry efforts there.

Asamoah utilized the skills of several local physical education teachers to run the camp, where 150 youth participated. He had previously been holding one-day basketball camps every Saturday through his area public schools. In both circumstances, the gospel message is a vital part of the presentation, but bringing other elements to the table—such as food, water and a meaningful activity—is the initial draw.

"The opportunity for people to come together is an attraction by itself," Asamoah said. "Sometimes young people are left on their own. They would love to have something to do. They really love sports and appreciate the opportunity. When they come, we give them a snack, and we give them water to drink. The temperatures are always high in the 90s. Every 45 minutes, we give them a break to drink water. When we finish with the training, we give them snacks to eat before they go home. That's an attraction for them—getting to play and getting food to eat—and then we share the word of God with them.

"It's one thing to teach someone to play sports. It's one thing to give someone food and water. It's another thing to show someone the love of God. You can't get any better than that."

Like so many FCA staff, Drew Beard, FCA Vice President of Field Ministry for the Southwest Region in the United States, has enjoyed watching the ministry steadily grow throughout West Africa. His region is aligned to serve FCA's ministry development in the region.

"They're not just doing a camp and celebrating the rewards," Beard said. "We're getting reports of young people who are getting saved and then becoming engaged in a local church. They're raising up disciples, and that's our mission. In a lot of ways, we're seeing our mission take hold internationally quicker than we see it happen here in America. The model is very clear to them, and they're working the plan everyday."

• • •

FCA International's camp efforts abroad represent a unique opportunity for global sports ministry leaders to utilize methods they haven't always conceptualized.

"That's a newer concept to other parts of the world," Higginbotham said. "There are tons of sports, and sports have the same impact everywhere, but there's not a lot of leadership training and development of sports ministry. Sports can get you into a country."

Conversely, working with African leaders like Asamoah and Samura has taught FCA staff in the U.S. some new ideas on how to most effectively assist their global partners.

"It was a paradigm shift, and I think this is where our whole ministry is headed," Higginbotham said. "Instead of sending a whole bunch of people to run a camp, how much better, how much more cost-effective, how much greater impact you can have if you find a need there and fill it with someone who has influence in that community. Instead of bringing 20 American kids to lead those camps, it's better to find 20 people in the community and raise them up as leaders. It produces a more stable ministry."

Beard believes this new model takes the best ideas from FCA's traditional playbook and adjusts them to the unique opportunities in places like West Africa.

"We are just giving them a chance to see how God has been doing it here for so many years, and they take it and make it their own," Beard said. "It's a simple discipleship model. It's a testimony to the people who have been called to do the work in those nations. Every leader who understands leadership is looking to mobilize leadership—to be able to have things happen when they're not around."

Moving forward, Britton is convinced the work being done in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Kenya will catch fire throughout the entire continent.

"Once one African country has success and sees how it can work, then those leaders can train the other leaders," he said. "Instead of the ideas coming from the U.S., it's a peer-to-peer mentoring opportunity. A lot of our leaders in Africa are helping other leaders start their camps. They're each making an investment to encourage them and show them that it can work."

"The hardest camp to do is the first camp. You think no one is going to show up. You do all this hard work and worry that it won't reach the level of success you hoped for. But when you see the kids show up, it's no longer a question of how many coaches and athletes are going to show up, but a question of if there are enough resources and enough volunteers to facilitate enough camps."

As far as Beard is concerned, FCA International already has the greatest resources it will ever need—the dedicated men and women who are passionate about reaching their nations for Christ through sports ministry.

"FCA has been positioned to empower these sports ministry leaders to serve God where they are," he said. "The Lord has really blessed us with some great partners in West Africa and across the globe."

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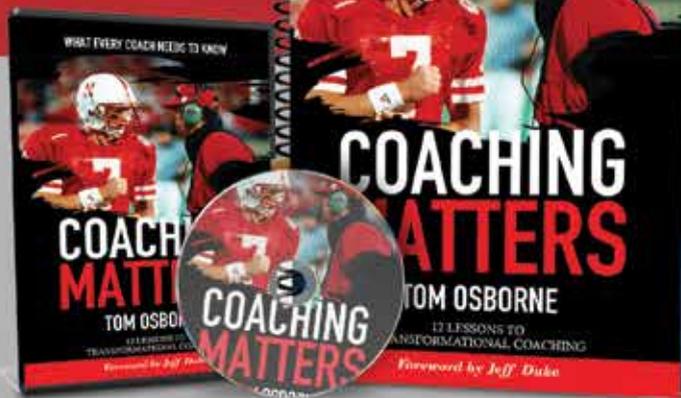
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"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:9

In Greek mythology, one quality of a hero is having "strength for two." In other words, to be heroic, you not only had to thrive on your own, but you also had to help someone else thrive. When we envision superheroes today, we're often drawn to both their physical strength as well as their moral strength to come to the aid of those in need.

Over the past several years, Spartan Racing has become part of my DNA. I love the electric atmosphere before each race, but what inspires me the most is witnessing those who are strong helping those who are struggling. Shouting words of encouragement is common in many non-Spartan races, but I've seen racers literally carrying other competitors, bearing their burdens, pitching in and paying someone's "burpee penalty," sometimes even hoisting them over a 10-foot wall.

The longer races (the Super and the Beast) have tested every bit of my physical, mental, spiritual and emotional strength. And I've been on the receiving end of borrowing someone else's strength. I thank God every time for those people; it's truly the best example I've seen of the "strength for two" principle. And, it's one of the main reasons I exercise regularly.

Having spent nearly 20 years in the health and fitness industry, I've met folks who exercise for all kinds of reasons. Some are recovering from surgery. Others do it because doctors told them they'd have serious health issues if they didn't. Some are trying to get bigger, faster and stronger so they can make a team. Still others do it simply to look good.

But I've met very few, if any, who say they're training "to be ready."

"Ready for what?" you might be asking. Well, ready for the challenges of every day. Ready to help someone who might need it. Ready in case of an emergency. Ready for life.

Abraham Lincoln once famously said, "Today I prepare, because one day my time will come." Lincoln lived with a sense of purpose. In the end, he not only had "strength for two"—he had strength for an entire nation.

The challenge for all of us is, will we have the "strength for two?" What are we willing to do to get ready? What am I personally willing to go through to ensure I'll be strong enough in mind, body and spirit to actually help others when the time comes?

I love how the Apostle Paul frequently used competitive comparisons to describe the journey of life, like in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: *"... So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should..."*

Applying that to your life and training, here are three keys to developing "strength for two."

- 1. PUSH BEYOND YOUR NORMAL LIMITS.** At some point, to increase your strength, you have to take on more than you can currently handle. To gain muscle, you have to lift heavier weights. To grow in faith, you have to step outside your comfort zone. To grow in empathy, you have to step inside another person's shoes. If it doesn't challenge you, it will never change you.
- 2. SEE PAIN AS YOUR FRIEND.** We all have to stop seeing pain as something to be avoided, and instead start using it to our advantage. God promises to use trials to refine us and mature us if we let Him. To grow, you need to depend on the strength of God in your weakness. To become more compassionate, you have to let God use your pain as a blessing to others in pain. God only allows pain so you will develop "strength for two."
- 3. FACE YOUR FEARS.** We have two choices when dealing with fear: We can "Forget Everything And Run," or we can "Face Everything And Rise." Scripture encourages us to take a stand, to be strong and courageous. *"If God is for us,"* we read in Romans 8:31, *"who can ever be against us?"* We have nothing to fear because the Lord our God is with us wherever we go. Courage isn't the absence of fear; it's taking action in spite of it. When we build a habit of facing our fears, we become armed with "strength for two."

We are in desperate need of heroes today. Heroes who have "strength for two." We need people who are morally strong, unwilling to cut corners or compromise. We need people who are physically strong enough to help others in need. And we need people who are emotionally strong enough to refresh and encourage those who are down and out.

So, be strong and courageous! It's time to develop the "strength for two."

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SIMPLE STEPS FOR STRENGTH:

- 1. What's one thing you will do right now to push beyond your limits in mind, body and spirit?**
- 2. What pain are you going through that you can let God turn into strength?**
- 3. What's one fear you can face right now to build confidence in God?**

about the author: JIMMY PAGE

Jimmy Page serves as the Executive Director of Field Ministry-West Division for FCA. As a 20-year medical fitness leader and former National Director of FCA Health and Fitness, he models and promotes principles that lead to abundant health and life. Jimmy is an author of *True Competitor*, *One Word*, *Wisdom Walks*, *Life Word*, and *Called to Greatness*. He and his wife, Ivelisse, started a cancer foundation called believebig.org following her victory over cancer. They live with their children in Fort Collins, Colorado. You can email Jimmy at jpage@fca.org.



GOLDEN
OPPORTUNITYBY MICHELLE CARTER
USA TRACK & FIELD*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." - Philippians 4:13 (NKVJ)*

We have conversations, God and me. He already knows what I'm thinking, so I might as well say it.

At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, I competed in the women's shot put. Before my final throw, I was in second place, behind Valerie Adams of New Zealand.

"Lord, silver is great," I prayed, "but I want gold. You told me I could have gold. You said it was mine, so if You don't show up any other time, I need You to show up now and do what You said You would do."

Then I told myself I needed to be a little more patient with my timing in the ring. I had to give my legs enough time to generate all of my power. I remember lifting the 8.8-pound metal sphere off my right shoulder, extending my arm, and releasing. The throw felt good. Once my mark was displayed on the scoreboard, I couldn't believe it. It was the furthest I'd ever thrown: 20.63 meters.

The number "1" went next to my name, and after Adams' final throw, the number "2" went next to hers. My dream of winning the gold medal had come true, and I praised God.

People who know me know I'm a Christian. They know what I believe,

and they can say, "You know, being a Christian isn't lame because you can still have fun; you can still have success."

Beyond being an athlete, I call myself "Shot Diva," someone who wants to promote women's beauty, fashion and the Christian lifestyle.

I tell people there's nothing I can't do, because God lives inside me. I learned that as a child, growing up in Texas.

My parents, Michael and Sandra, played a large role in making sure I was involved in church, whether it was being an usher, singing in the choir, or participating as one of the youth leaders. I was 7 years old when I asked for God's salvation.

Sports were a big part of my childhood too. I played soccer and basketball until seventh grade, when coaches asked me to try track and field. At first, my father questioned me. He knew the coaches knew who he was. He won three Super Bowls in the 1980s as a nose tackle for the San Francisco 49ers, and in 1984 he won an Olympic silver medal in the men's shot put, the only man to ever accomplish both of those feats.

He told me, "I'm going to help you, even though you don't know what you're getting yourself into." From that day, my father has been my coach.

Through faith and sports, I've learned discipline and self-control. In the Bible, God tells us we have to work, even if what we want is not going to happen right away. People want a platform, but with that comes responsibility. Before winning the gold medal, I needed to be in a mature place to handle

the opportunities that were going to come my way, to make sure I didn't use them for my advantage. You have to put your pride aside and let God's plan come through. He has given me this platform for Him to shine.

At the 2012 London Olympics, I finished fifth. Around that time, I started having health concerns. I had hypothyroidism, which prevented me from being my best. I didn't win, but I still considered it a victory because my faith grew. None of it was a waste. I had to learn to accept myself, whether I was healthy or not, like when I had a herniated disc in my back just months before the 2016 Olympics.

Instead of losing faith, I asked God questions: "Lord, what are You trying to show me? What are You doing, because I don't understand? You keep telling me to get ready for something, right?"

I trusted God. At that time, I was 19 years into my throwing career. It was 19 years of work for this one moment. I believed God had told me I was going to be a gold medalist—the highest accomplishment possible—but I didn't know how it was going to happen.

When the Olympic official put that gold medal around my neck, everything I had been through and worked for was worth it. I became the first American woman ever to win gold in the shot put. I know God allowed me to have this medal, and with it I want to glorify Him and point others to Him.

Kirk Franklin has a song titled, "The Last Jesus." One part of the lyrics says, "I may be the only Jesus they see." I hope I carry myself in such a way that, when people encounter me, they get to encounter Christ.

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about the author: MICHELLE CARTER

BORN: Oct. 12, 1985

HOMETOWN: Red Oak, Texas

COLLEGE: Texas

TURNED PRO: 2007

NOTES:

- First American Olympic gold medalist in women's shot put (2016)
- Three-time Olympian (2008, 2012, 2016)
- World Championship gold medalist (2016)
- NCAA Indoor national champion (2006)



"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful." - 2 Timothy 4:7

A wonderful athletic director I knew had a saying on his business card: "Sports is life with the volume turned up." Think about it: Sports has its own section of the newspaper devoted to it. There are at least a half-dozen networks and countless websites devoted to analyzing every move 24 hours a day. All the "noise" has given people a sense of entitlement to criticize and judge and express a variety of opinions, thus turning the volume way up. Being an athlete is not for the faint-hearted or weak-minded. And neither is being a coach! If you have been called to a position of leadership (either as a coach or as an athlete), you will inevitably be making decisions that impact those around you. As John Maxwell said, "Leading others takes courage. Knowing the right decision is usually easy. Making the right decision is hard."

Such responsibility requires vision and input to make decisions that rise above all the noise.

VISION:

"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."

—Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

Moses was chosen by God to deliver what many consider to be the first recorded "vision." It contained core values by which the people of Israel were instructed to live. The Ten Commandments provided clear focus and a foundation for their decision-making process.

During my coaching years, the vision for our program was emphasized daily. It became the focal point of our culture and it guided the behavior of each individual associated with our team. Habakkuk 2:2 (NIV) says, *"Then the LORD replied: Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it."*

Let's break down these instructions:

- Write down the vision (goals, core values).
- Make it plain on tablets (clear, meaningful, applicable).
- So he may run (act upon it, so it's reflected in behavior and actions).
- Who reads it (coaches, players, parents, boosters, anyone).

Following these guidelines, the vision for our program was formed. It served as the foundation for the way we treated ourselves and one another. It was the measuring stick for decision-making and accountability. It was our focus amidst the noise.

INPUT:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

—Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

It is essential to have trusted relationships among all the noise and distraction of this world. In an article titled "Mentoring in the Old Testament," Travis Snode identifies three characteristics of mentoring relationships: The relationship must be close, it must be transparent, and the mentor must genuinely desire the best for his or her protégé.

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, served as a mentor. In a typical move for many young leaders, Moses was trying to do it all. Jethro saw this, and he knew it wasn't in Moses' best interest, so he stepped in: *"... What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you..."* (Exodus 18:17-19, NIV)

Mentors like Jethro are invaluable. They give us truth through observation and love.

"Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life." (Proverbs 19:20)

God selected Joshua as Moses' successor, but before he was ready to take on that calling, he spent 40 years of quality time as a mentee. Forty years! On several occasions, both Moses and God reminded Joshua to be *"strong and courageous"* (Deuteronomy 31:6-7; 23). So, when it came time for Joshua to lead, the advice was the same: *"... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight."* (Joshua 10:25, NIV)

As a strong and courageous leader, remember these two foundational pieces. First, develop and live by a vision that reflects your core values. And second, be purposeful about the relationships in your life. Then, when the noise inevitably comes, you will be equipped to stay strong and remain focused on the vision ahead. **FCA**



about the author: SUE RAMSEY

Sue Ramsey's commitment to excellence is overshadowed only by her deep faith. In 35 years as a coach, including 20 as the head coach at Ashland University, Ramsey won the Division II national championship in 2013, following a runner-up finish in 2012. Ramsey's holistic approach to coaching helped her earn an induction into Athletes in Action's "Hall of Faith" in 2013. She also received the Carol Eckman Integrity in Coaching Award in 2012 and the FCA Kay Yow Heart of a Coach Award in 2011.

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