



The Lasorda Way
2024 **IMPACT**
REPORT

At Steel Sports, our mission has always been clear: to inspire youth to reach their potential on and off the field by developing them as athletes and as people. The 2024 Impact Report is a testament to that mission and to the incredible work of our coaches, athletes, and families who embody *The Lasorda Way* every day.

This year's report highlights what we at Steel Sports have always known: sports have the power to shape character, instill lifelong values, and prepare young people for success beyond the game. Our approach is more than just competition; it is about fostering teamwork, respect, integrity, and commitment in every athlete who wears the Steel Sports logo.

The data speaks for itself: our athletes are growing not only as competitors but as leaders, scholars, and community members. With a 100% high school graduation rate, a 98% college matriculation rate, and consistently high scores in core competencies like confidence, resilience, and leadership, Steel Athletes are proving that the lessons learned through sports translate into lifelong success.

We are particularly proud of the trust our athletes place in their coaches, with 88% reporting a strong connection with their mentors. This is the heart of *The Lasorda Way*—creating a positive, challenging, and supportive environment where young people can thrive. Our emphasis on Free Play, Growth Mindset, and Positive Mental Health continues to drive impact, ensuring that Steel Sports is not just developing better athletes but better people.

While we celebrate our achievements, we remain committed to continuous growth. This year's report reveals opportunities to further strengthen leadership development and confidence-building in our athletes. As we look ahead to 2025, we will build on these findings, ensuring that every young person who participates in our programs leaves with the skills, values, and belief in themselves to achieve their full potential.

Thank you to our coaches, families, and partners for your dedication to our Kids First philosophy. The impact we are making together is profound, and we are just getting started.



Martin Brown

Steel Sports President & CEO

Impact Report Contents

Introduction by Martin Brown	2
Summary	3
Overview/Methodology	4
A Look at Athletes	5
The Lasorda Way + Core Values	6-7
Core Competencies	8-11
Core Competencies & Positive Mental Health	12-14
Growth Mindset, Grit & Free Play	15-18
Conclusion	19
Survey Quotes	20-22



THE LASORDA WAY 2024 IMPACT REPORT

The Lasorda Way provides athletes with an exceptional sports experience that not only leads to enhanced athletic development, but also deeply engages in character development fostering personal growth in Core Values, Core Competencies, Grit, and Growth Mindset.

Steel Coaches utilize exceptional tools that foster Core Competencies including confidence and leadership. They build Growth Mindset and Grit as well as Positive Mental Health characteristics such as collaboration and resilience. The skills developed within Steel Sports contribute to athletes demonstrating strengths above and beyond that of their peers both on and off the field of play. Athletes who play for Steel Teams are primed to excel as athletes, in their academic endeavors, and in their communities. Steel Athletes matriculate through our system and are uniquely prepared for college, careers, and lifelong success.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose: To measure Steel Athletes' development and growth in comparison to prior years and to national averages.

Mission: To inspire youth to reach their potential on and off the field, by developing them as athletes and people through the Steel Sports Coaching System — The Lasorda Way.

“This is crucial for long-term athlete well-being and development. By recognizing the athlete’s full humanity, coaches can build stronger relationships, foster trust, and address issues beyond the playing field.”

— Ian Hughes, VP, Staff and Player Development

TOP HIGHLIGHTS

Steel Athletes are growing beyond the game

86% of Steel parents reported that their athlete enjoyed their experience. Athletes frequently mention “having fun” as a motivator, viewing fun as a crucial aspect of both practice and game settings.

96% of Steel athletes reported good or excellent understanding and utilization of the Core Values

90% of Steel athletes reported “good” or “excellent” scores related to Grit and Growth Mindset

88% of Steel Athletes indicated a high amount of trust in their coach

89% of Steel Athletes reported “good” or “excellent” scores related to positive mental health

OVERVIEW

- Background: 2024 marks our third year analyzing data from kids, caregivers, and coaches to measure our impact. While we have surveyed for 5+ years, 2024 marks our most thorough review yet and highlights both the consistency and depth of the positive impact our coaches and Steel Sports Coaching System: The Lasorda Way has on kids.
- What impact are we making? The Steel Sports Coaching System: *The Lasorda Way* is consistently supporting character development in Steel Athletes in the form of Core Competencies, is effectively instilling the Core Values: Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, and Commitment, and cultivating characteristics of positive mental health. *The Lasorda Way* is a system dedicated to putting Kids First and the results show empowerment in every measurable way.
- Objectives:
 - o To measure the impact Steel Coaches and The Lasorda Way are making on kids
 - o To demonstrate the growth and character development Steel Kids are experiencing
 - o To empower kids to grow beyond the game

METHODOLOGY:

We compared Steel Athletes with national averages in areas such as high school graduation, college matriculation, and positive mental health. Using our Core Competency data, we compared our athletes' Growth Mindset, Grit, and proven learning outcomes from Free Play. We compared year-over-year areas of emphasis such as our Core Values: Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, and Commitment.

Data Collected:

- Athlete Self Evaluation
- Coach Feedback
- Team Survey (Athletes/parents)
- Facilities & Events Survey (All attendees at events such as tournaments)
- *Kids First Camp Survey* (New 2024)
- Feedback Forums (Online parent focus groups)

1. 1,500 athletes via player self-evaluations (Steel Teams)

- Athlete Self-Evaluations

2. 1,800 coaches in response to player self-evaluations (Steel Teams)

- Coach response to player self-evaluations: Coaches evaluate and respond to player evaluations. This is a valuable look at two distinct perspectives and how they match or do not match.

3. 1,200 parents/adult caregivers via team surveys (Steel Teams)

- Participants (typically adult caregivers although it can be athletes themselves) are asked to complete a survey on their experience playing for Steel teams. Team surveys include feedback primarily from Steel United and Team Steel and include National Program team feedback from about 250 athletes.

4. 600 Facilities & Events Surveys (adult caregivers, players, coaches, officials)

- Customers from tournaments and overnight camps, typically adult caregivers, are asked to complete a survey after each event. The survey covers areas related to the event and includes Core Values and NPS.

5. 150 Kids First Camp Surveys (adult caregivers)

- *Kids First Camps* included families and community members, and typically adult caregivers are asked to complete a survey after each event. The survey covers areas related to the program and includes Core Values, Steel Sports Coaches, and NPS.

6. Feedback Forums (all regions)

- All parents were invited to an anonymous webinar-style polling event during which they were surveyed and had an open forum to give feedback.

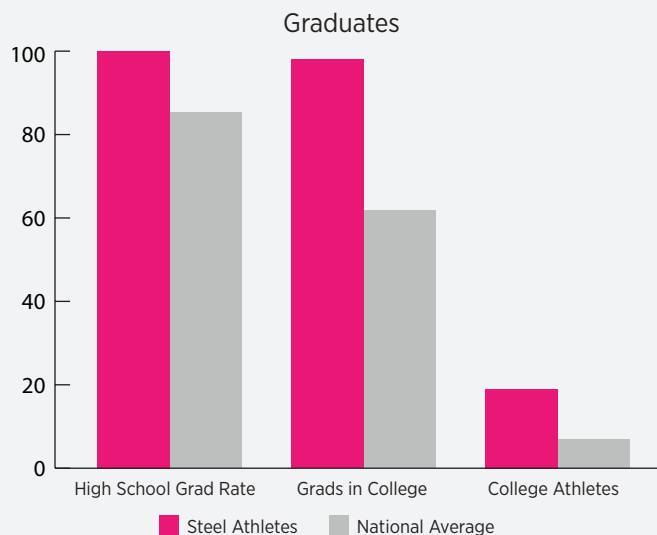
Balancing support with challenge:

“This is the core of effective coaching. Steel coaches are trained to navigate this tension, providing the right amount of support to build confidence and the right amount of challenge to foster growth. This requires empathy, understanding, and a deep knowledge of each athlete’s individual needs.”

— Ian Hughes, VP, Staff and Player Development

STEEL ATHLETES

Steel Athletes continue to achieve academic success beyond the national average.



- 100% Grad Rate 2024, 2023, 2022 (National avg. 85.3%)
- 98% to college (National avg 61.8%) (92% in 2022, 89% in 2023)
- 19%, down from 52% in 2023 and 33% in 2022 (National Avg. 7% play a varsity sport and 2% play a DI sport)

Access:

- 145 Steel Athletes received financial aid
- \$140,000 in scholarships
- Average \$950 per athlete
- \$45,000 came from donations made through the Steel Sports Foundation

Athletes in Service:

13,000

hours of time

14,000

items donated to charity

\$43,000

raised for charity

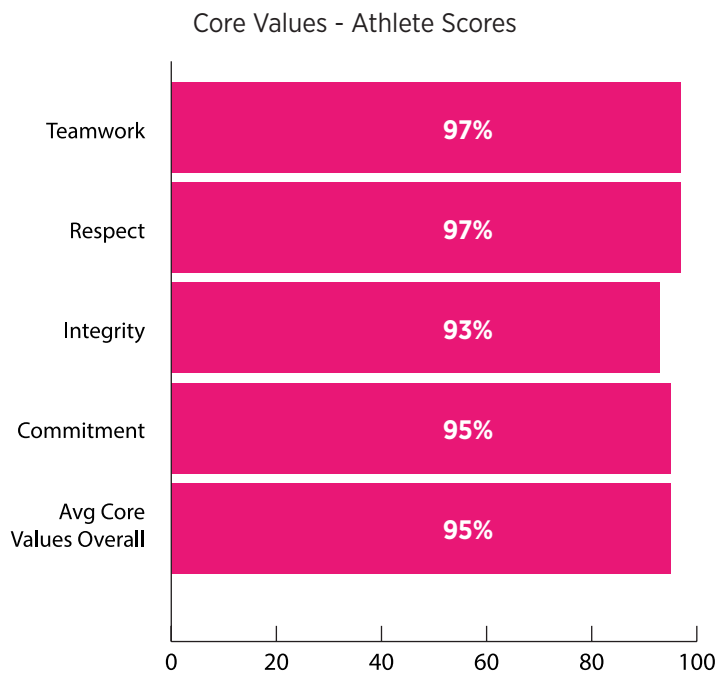
25,000

community members impacted

THE LASORDA WAY

Regular training teaches coaches to deliberately concentrate on demonstrating and instructing core values in every facet of their coaching and interactions with athletes, parents, officials, and opponents. Coaches help their athletes reach the stage of transformational behavior by guiding them through the three stages of awareness, engagement, and reflection. This means that our athletes can use these core values not only on the field but also at home, school, and in their community. Additionally, athletes are given access to online modules that offer core values examples and emphasize the value of them while allowing them to define them in a way that is true to themselves. Parents also finish a Positive Sports Parenting Module that explains our core values, how to teach their children about them, and how parents should embrace and model them for their children.

UNDERSTANDING AND EMBODIMENT OF CORE VALUES: PLAYER EVALUATIONS



Core Values scores remain consistently high for the third year in a row. 95% indicated satisfactory or higher for their understanding and implementation of the Core values

- Teamwork: 97%
- Respect: 97%
- Integrity: 93%
- Commitment: 95%

Elevating belief:

“The coach’s belief in the athlete’s potential can be a powerful motivator, encouraging them to overcome self-doubt and reach their full potential.”

— Ian Hughes, VP, Staff and Player Development

CORE VALUES

Teamwork: Athletes stress the importance of bonding and communication with teammates. Comments reflect appreciation for and enjoyment in working together toward a common goal on the field, which helps foster a strong sense of connection.

Respect: Athletes express valuing sportsmanship, an appreciation for respectful behavior on and off the field.

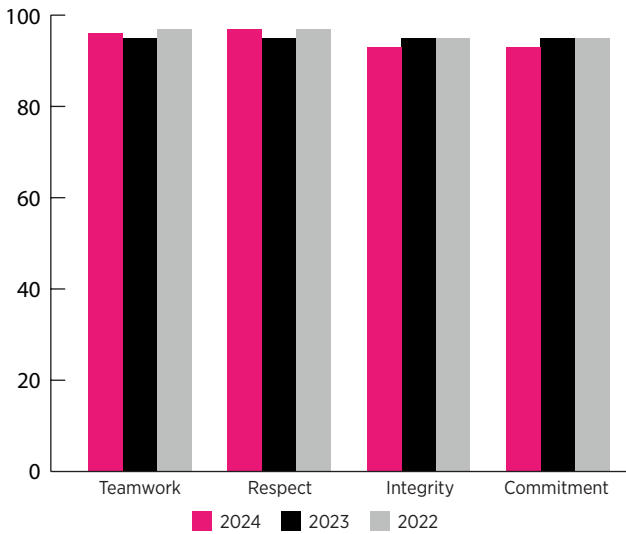
Integrity: Athletes note integrity as aligning actions with values and doing the right thing consistently—the most athletes positively align with integrity.

Commitment: Athletes frequently mention a dedication to overcoming challenges and striving for continuous improvement. Many value the persistence needed to pursue team and personal goals.

Athletes comment that the Core Values guide their responses to adversity and help them maintain perspective and positivity. Core Values help develop players’ resilience and growth mindset. Overall, athlete feedback illustrates that the Core Values are central to their growth as athletes and people.

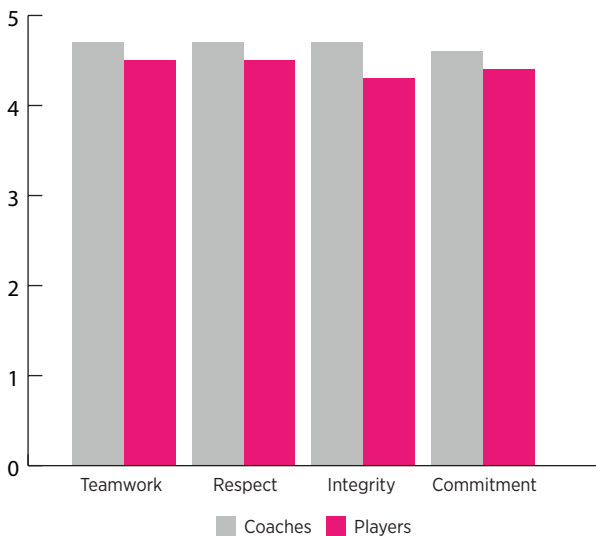
CORE VALUES: SCORES FROM TEAMS SURVEYS

Parent Perspectives: Core Values 2022-2024



Core Values scores from parents continue to be high, and range between 93%-97% positive scores over the past 3 years.

Coach vs. Player: Core Values



While athlete Core Values scores are very high, it is important to note that coaches' scores are consistently higher (this is true of all coach scores). Coaches tend to see potential and positive aspects in athletes. They are pushing them to improve and elevating expectations

“As Tommy used to say, ‘You have to believe.’ For many young children, this begins when coaches continuously show that they believe in each child and foster an atmosphere that prioritizes work and growth over victory. This helps the athletes believe in their ability to overcome setbacks and pursue long-term growth.”

— Steve Jones, Senior VP, Steel Sports Coaching System — The Lasorda Way

Core Competencies: Confidence, Self-Control, Positivity, Leadership, Humility, Concentration, Openness to Constructive Criticism

Parent Perspectives & Steel Athlete Core Competencies:

- 80% of parents believe that sports help their child learn about discipline and dedication, as well as how to get along with others. In comparison, we correlate discipline with self-control, which 84% of Steel Athletes score “good” or “excellent”. We connect dedication with commitment which 95% of Steel Athletes score “good” or “excellent.”
- 73% of parents believe that sports benefit their child’s mental health and 88% believe sports benefit their child’s physical health. In the Core Competencies Chart below we illustrate how athletes assess their proficiency in 7 areas which our *Lasorda Way* curriculum prioritizes, and which are associated with characteristics of positive mental health.

Athlete Scores “Good” or “Excellent” in Core Competencies



Core Competencies: What has developed? Why do they matter?

Steel kids express high scores (over 80) in 4 of 7 Core Competencies, and solid scores (over 70) in all 7 of the Core Competencies: Confidence, Self Control, Positivity, Leadership, Humility, Concentration, and Openness to Constructive Criticism. Cultivating Core Competencies occurs through the strategies engrained in *The Lasorda Way* curriculum and are intentionally cultivated by Steel Coaches.

SPOTLIGHT ON CONFIDENCE

Confidence noun

1. the feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something; firm trust.
2. a feeling of self-assurance arising from one’s appreciation of one’s own abilities or qualities.

**“85% of Americans suffer from low self-esteem.”
-Psychology Today**

70% of Steel Athletes report good or excellent levels of confidence

Confidence was a point of emphasis in 2024 and will continue to be a priority as confidence scores continue to rise and until they exceed the 80% mark.

Steel Athletes cite confidence as being a result of a supportive team environment. Experiences with positive reinforcement from coaches and teammates help athletes develop trust in their own abilities and in others around them—confidence. Player Self-Evaluations suggest that a supportive environment, resilience, and the opportunity to learn from mistakes are key factors in building confidence among athletes.

Building confidence through Positive Mistake Culture:

“The key to developing a Positive Mistake Culture is not just accepting that mistakes/ failures happen BUT that they are opportunities to learn from the mistake and to learn how to self-reflect. Coaches are trained to teach Self-reflection with their athletes which then empowers the athlete to lead the process, understanding why the mistake happened and what they could change if this situation occurred again in the future. The key is the coach facilitates not leads this process.”

— Steve Jones, Senior VP, Steel Sports Coaching System — The Lasorda Way

Coaches and Confidence

Coaches play a critical role in shaping player’s confidence in their performance-based environment and in life beyond sports.

“My coach helps me through mistakes and teaches me how to improve.”

Why it matters:

Confidence as a Protective Factor

“Confidence is inextricably linked with resilience. If we feel confident, we are less likely to give up if things get tough and are more likely to be able to cope with the challenges life inevitably throws at us. Instilling confidence in children is key for them to develop resilience in later life. Confident children will usually grow up to be confident adults. They are more likely to have emotional resilience, better problem-solving skills and a positive self-image.”—The Link Between Confidence and Mental Health, 5th May 2024 by Vicky Miller

Steel athletes, in developing their levels of confidence, in turn are developing resilience, problem-solving skills, and positive self-esteem. As they venture through life, these skills provide strength and tools to navigate adversity and to cope with life’s challenges. At the youth level, confidence may provide an armor to resist potentially harmful temptations, to stay focused on their goals, and to prepare them for adulthood.

Steel coaches have a profound impact on children’s confidence by providing positive reinforcement, offering constructive feedback, modeling resilience, fostering teamwork, and setting realistic goals. Through coaches’ guidance, athletes learn how to navigate challenges, improve their skills, and, most importantly, believe in themselves.

Athlete Comments on Core Competencies:

86% Self-Control is described as “crucial,” especially when handling emotions and responding to failure. Steel athletes know their self-control is crucial—despite maturity often being a challenge. Players frequently mention staying positive, controlling reactions during games, and learning from constructive feedback.

87% Positivity: Steel athletes express that maintaining a positive attitude is a priority, particularly after mistakes or losses. Many players appreciate the value of encouragement from coaches and teammates, which helps them keep a positive mindset during challenging situations.

71% Leadership: Steel athletes describe leadership as taking initiative and supporting teammates. They value opportunities to lead in practice drills or during game scenarios, which helps develop accountability and motivates others. Leadership has notably dropped in 2024, down by 18%, and will be an area of emphasis along with confidence in 2025. The decline is due to factors such as age, newer players with fewer years playing with Steel Sports, and lower attendance for athlete programs such as Athlete Leadership Council. However, there has also been the most dramatic increase (2022-23) and decrease (2023-24) so this Core Competency might be one that fluctuates.

78% Humility: Steel athletes describe humility as identifying areas for improvement and welcoming feedback. Many express comfort in learning from losses and understanding that mistakes are part of the growth process.

83% Concentration: Athletes mention that concentration is especially valued during practice drills and strategic plays. Players focus on drills that improve their technical skills and mental sharpness, enabling better performance during games. Concentration may be a subtle building block for confidence as the athletes imply.

88% Openness to Criticism: Many players report being able to receive constructive criticism as a strength among Steel athletes overall. Comments especially describe feedback from coaches as a pathway to skill enhancement and better game performance. The respect and trust Steel athletes have in their coaches is an integral part of their openness to receive critical feedback with positivity and an open mind.

Additionally, to the credit of Steel Coaches, a trend emerged from athlete comments that centers on Trust. Frequent comments include referencing their coach as a trusted adult, as providing valuable feedback, as contributing to their building of confidence, and fostering a fun, healthy, rigorous learning environment.

Parent vs. Player Perspectives on Core Competencies

94% of **Steel parents** believe sports will help their child achieve their academic goals

72% of **Steel parents** believe that Steel specifically will help their athlete prepare for their careers

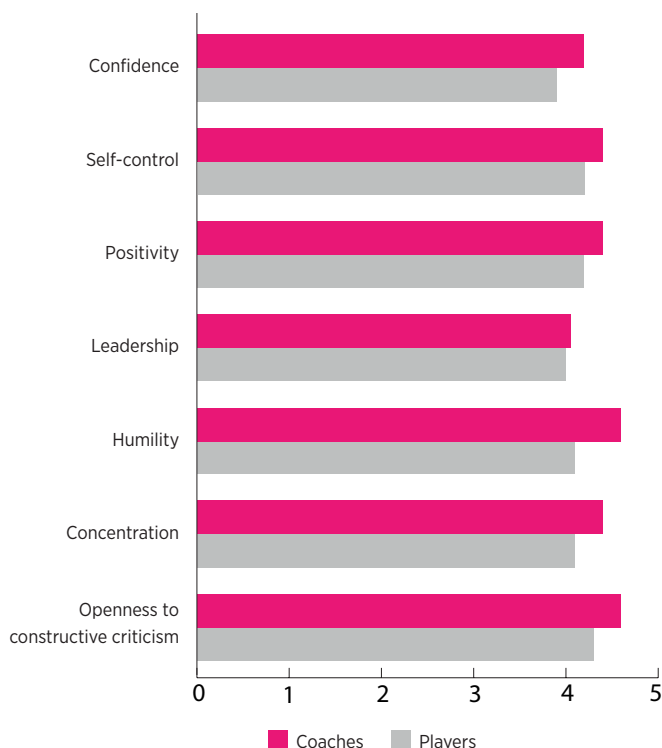
100% of **Steel parents** believe sports will help their child achieve their academic goals

A broad range of factors may contribute to differences in perspectives from parents, coaches, and players as they relate to Core Competencies. Parent:Player perspectives offered the least consistency which may indicate the deep and complicated relationships between parents and children as well as the multi-faceted view of a parent which likely includes their child in many different scenarios outside of sport. In other words, there are too many layers to adequately dissect differences in scores between parents and players.

Coach vs. Player Perspectives on Core Competencies

Steel coaches, on the other hand, see their athletes through a simpler lens: their athletes are kids, athletes, leaders, and young people in the midst of development. Steel coaches see their athletes as kids with shared goals and know the job of a coach is to support their development and serve as mentors. As such, coaches are able to more narrowly assess each player's Core Competencies and we see, generally, that coaches once again have a slightly elevated assessment of their players which indicates their heightened belief in the athlete and the expectation that their athlete is capable of more than the athlete may know to be possible. Here exists the beautiful tension between support and challenge—the balance of which Steel coaches are uniquely trained.

Coach vs. Player: Core Competencies



“The Steel coaching philosophy offers a compelling model for athlete development. By prioritizing the holistic well-being of athletes, fostering a supportive and challenging environment, and believing in their potential, these coaches can make a significant positive impact on their lives. This approach is valuable not only in sports but also in any context where individuals are seeking to develop their skills and reach their full potential.”

— Steve Jones, Senior VP, Steel Sports Coaching System — The Lasorda Way

Core Competencies & Positive Mental Health

Athlete Self-Evaluations consist of an extensive survey including skill assessment, Core Values, National Rituals, and Core Competencies. The Core Competencies reflect metrics used to measure positive mental health (PMH) by the AAP, APA, and NIMH and are areas of emphasis for our *The Lasorda Way* coaching curriculum. In other words, Core Competencies are not only cultivated by Steel coaches, they represent widely accepted indicators of positive mental health. While Steel Sports' Core Competencies are not identical metrics for positive mental health, we examine the similarities with the purpose of supporting athlete positive mental health to the extent possible—they are not concrete data comparisons, but anecdotal comparisons of positive mental health. Steel coaches aim to provide the utmost positive culture and developmental relationships while prioritizing athlete well-being.

U.S. Teens Report:

- **2023: 20.1% of U.S. teens (ages 12-17) reported significant episodes of depression. (A 5.3% increase from 2022 and 6.4% increase from 2021)** (Mental Health America, 2023)
- Nearly 15% of adolescents are reported to experience a clinically diagnosed anxiety disorder between age 13-18. 36% report feeling nervous or anxious. (Chiu et al., 2016)
- Project Play: *State of Play*: “Youth connect increased physical activity to better mental health. For example, 25% of youth who said they had zero days of physical activity reported feeling depressed or hopeless nearly every day, more than twice the rate (11%) of those who reported being active every day.”

Steel Teens:

- **87%** of **Steel athletes** report good or excellent levels of positivity.
- **90%** of **Steel athletes** report good or excellent levels of our combined Growth Mindset and Grit scores.
- **OVER 88%** (up from 84% in 2023 and 80% in 2022) of Steel Athletes report proficiency or better in characteristics of good mental health (confidence, positivity, humility, self-control, concentration)-which correlate to the Positive Mental Health Score. In comparison, 67.8% of U.S. college students (3,300 people) studied scored “Good” on the Positive Mental Health scale.

Positive Mental Health Metrics:

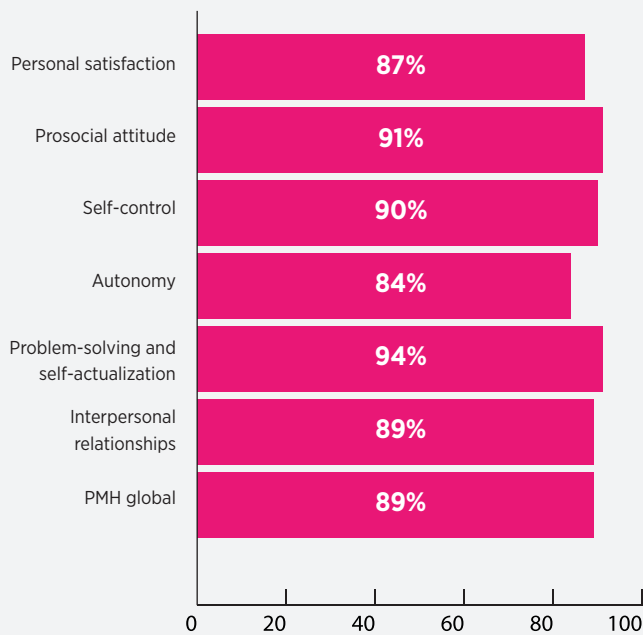
- Carefree and in good spirits
- Enjoyment in life
- Satisfaction in life
- General confidence
- Manage to fulfill personal needs
- Good physical and emotional condition
- Equipped to deal with life and its difficulties
- Find joy
- Calm and balanced

**as suggested by the APA and NIMH*

Steel Athletes—Self Evaluation and Positive Mental Health:

We reviewed Steel Athlete Evaluations and adapted our metrics to characteristics of Positive Mental Health (PMH). Steel Athletes scored incredibly high in 2024, consistent with 2023 and indicate that our athletes are developing skills that relate to characteristics of Positive Mental Health as listed below:

Steel Sports Core Competencies
Assimilated to Positive Mental Health



“Capability is the antidote to anxiety ... Kids only develop capability from watching themselves get through hard things. They don’t develop capability by being successful ever. In some ways, it builds up this pressure and a fragility if that’s been the only thing they have. And when we think about this whole generation who’s so anxious, kind of so fragile, I really believe the antidote to anxiety is capability.”

— Dr. Becky Kennedy, Founder of Good Inside and a clinical psychologist, on building tenacity in kids

Positive Mental Health and U.S. Teens:

40% of U.S. teens report feeling irritable or angry. (Breckler & Ballard, 2014)

32% of teens say stress makes them feel as if they could cry. (Breckler & Ballard, 2014)

31% report feeling overwhelmed and 30% report feeling depressed/sad as a result of stress (Breckler & Ballard, 2014)

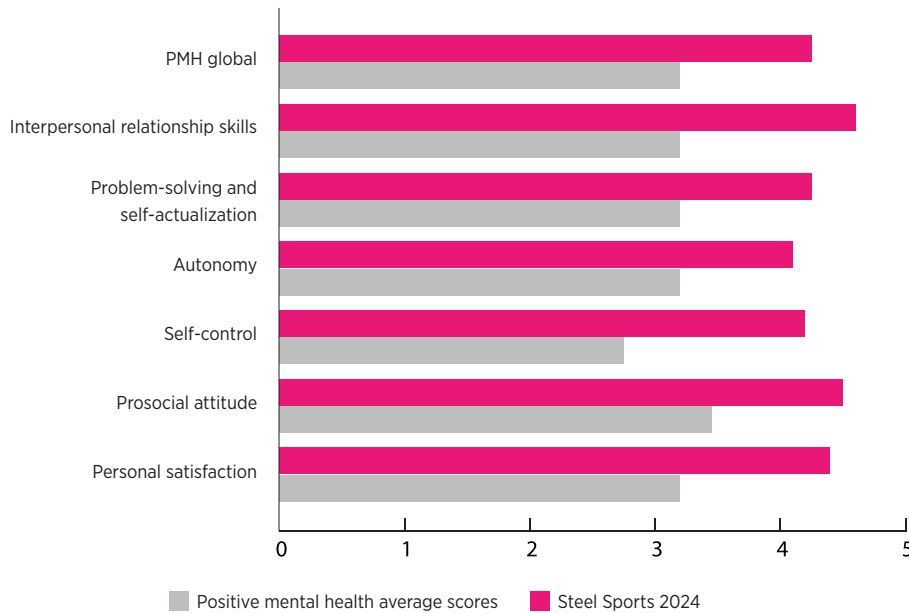
Positive Mental Health and Steel Kids:

86% of Steel Kids report they are able to manage emotions, failure appropriately.

87% of Steel Kids report that they feel more happiness and less worry when they are playing with Steel Sports than most other activities.

While we cannot ethically measure mental health areas of concern such as anxiety and depression, we do measure characteristics of positive mental health which, when fostered, can prevent mental health issues and build layers of resilience when athletes face adversity of all types. We are building skills, like capability, in Steel athletes to face adversity, be resilient, and generate positivity.

Positive Mental Health Scores: National vs Steel Sports Comparables

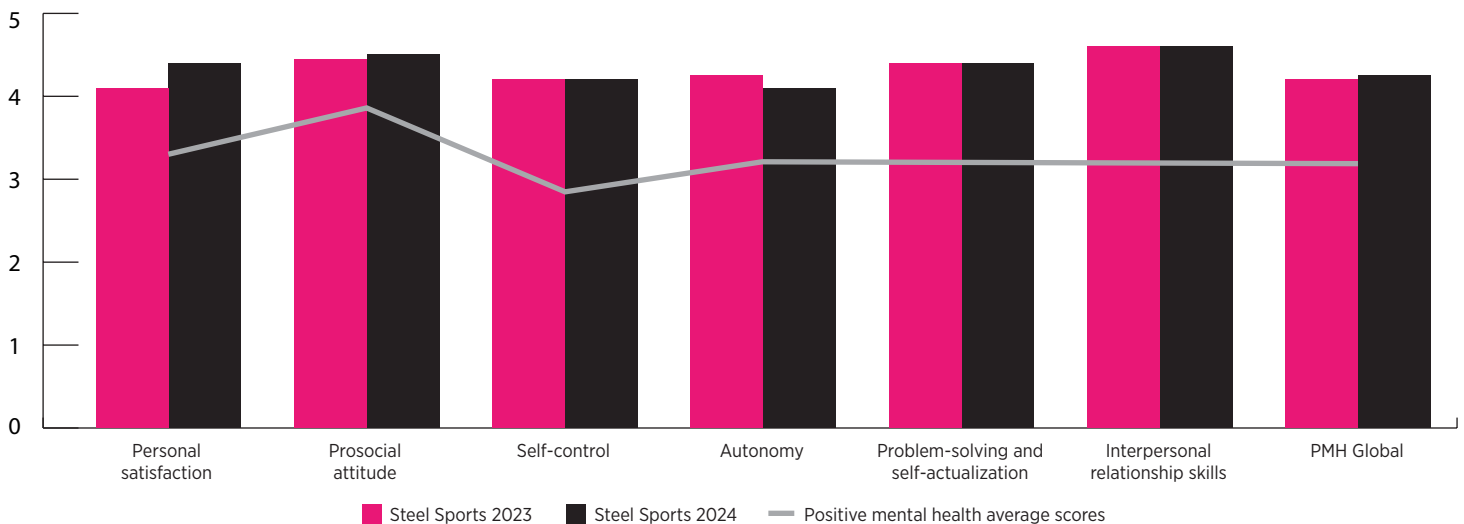


We adapted our Core Competency scores to compare to similar metrics of Positive Mental Health (PMH) scores. While our survey process is not identical (nor should it be) to mental health assessments, this is our closest comparison of Steel Athletes with U.S. youth mental health data. These data are not “apples to apples” but rather are a loose representation of Steel versus the national average.

Notes:

An interesting finding is that 2 years of data show very similar results and, once again, consistency is the most notable accomplishment. To consistently cultivate a space in which youth athletes can develop characteristics of positive mental health, a “toolbox” for life, directly aligns with our mission.

Steel PMH 2023 & 2024 versus PMH U.S. Average



- Teens who engage in more physically active stress management behaviors report lower stress levels and better health behaviors overall. (APA study: 1,018 youth respondents ages 13 to 17.) (Breckler & Ballard, 2014)
- According to Project Play’s “State of Play 2023”: Training coaches on mental health and wellbeing for kids is becoming a priority. Less than half of baseball (45%) and soccer (41%) coaches said they feel “moderately or extremely prepared” to work with athletes struggling with mental health – a lower rate than basketball coaches (57%).
- Steel coaches each complete over 15 Continuing Education Units per year and are equipped with tools to grow their preparedness for athletes’ needs. Mental health and well-being are priorities, and they work to evolve with the needs of Steel kids.
- Steel coaches integrate various strategies to connect and support Steel athletes, for examples:
 - **The Traffic Light System:** When players arrive and during free play the coach should ‘assess’ the players character - and if any players arrive as red then the coach is responsible for ensuring they leave as green. They can do this by offering more positive reinforcement than usual & lessening the challenge so players may feel more success than usual.
 - **Challenging every play:** Coaches follow the guidelines to ensure players feel successful without the practices being unrealistic – it’s good that players are unsuccessful sometimes but balancing this is vital for continues confidence.

Steel Kids' Perspectives: Growth Mindset, Grit, and Free Play

Steel Kids and Coaches:

96%

of **Steel Kids** report that they enjoy the challenging aspects of their sport and 97% report that they feel proud when they complete difficult tasks. These results indicate grit and resilience.

Additionally, two years in a row, Steel Kids cite Athletic Development, Competing, and Having Fun, respectively as the top 3 reasons “Why they play.”

86%

of **Steel Kids** report appropriate response to Failure. 92% find the Debrief as valuable—fostering learning and trust.



Response to Failure: Athletes most commonly highlight the following skills:

1. Embracing Failure as a learning and growth opportunity
2. Maintaining a positive attitude during adversity
3. Improved Resilience and Mental Toughness

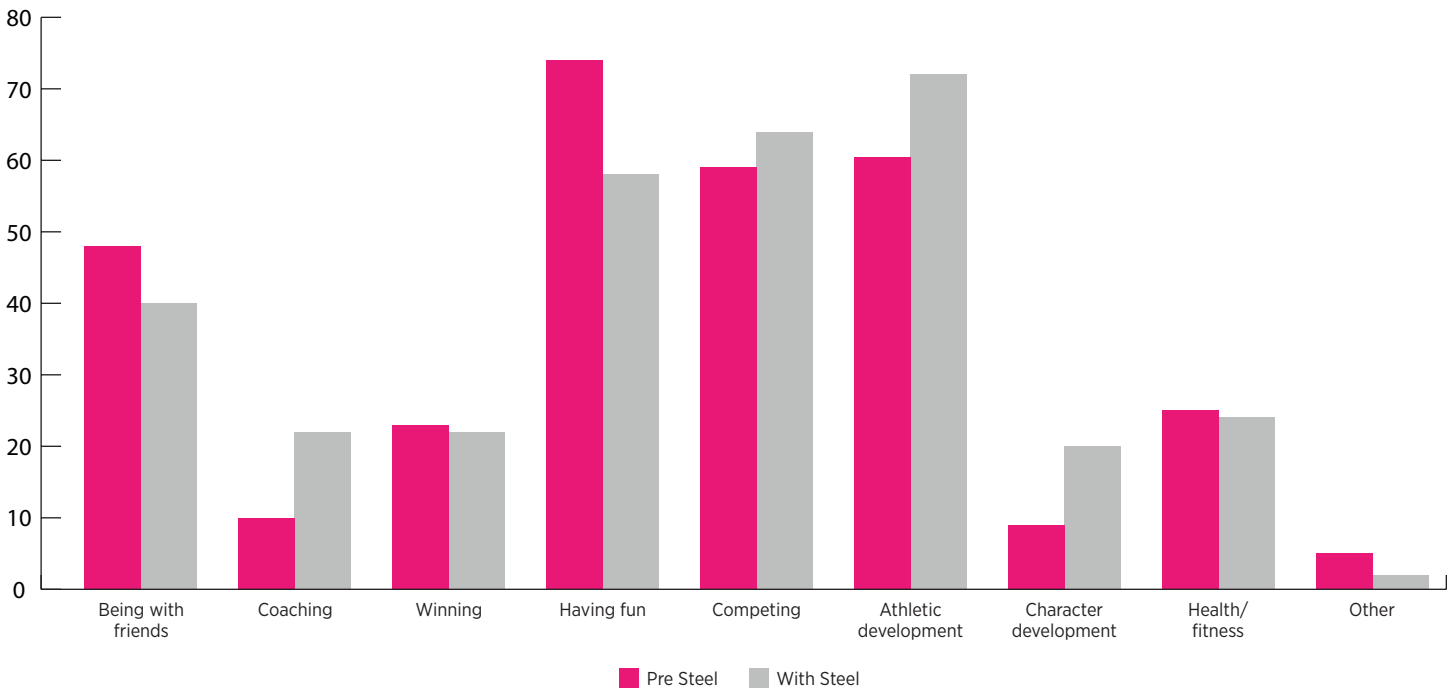
Athlete comments include descriptions of moments of adversity, mistakes, or failed attempts and are keenly aware of the importance of reflection and analysis followed by trying again, trying harder, staying positive, and deepening motivation. Athletes repeatedly comment on the importance of coaches and teammates providing constructive feedback which can only be accepted when trust and respect are established. Athletes also commonly describe their supportive team environment in which collective learning, accountability, and process-oriented attitudes thrive. Athlete comments drastically lean toward a growth mindset as it pertains to response to failure, and still they express the desire to improve mental toughness and self-control. They are seeking techniques to move past mistakes faster, and are focused on developing a deeper understanding of tactical gameplay and how to address weaknesses.

“Why I Play”

Steel athletes repeat, year over year, the same 3 top priorities when asked why they play. Once again, Athletic Development, Competing, and Having Fun top the charts respectively. It comes as no surprise that athletes want to improve and compete, and it serves as a *Kids First* reminder as well as a call to action to ensure youth athletes are having fun.

In 2024, two interesting results emerged: the importance of coaching and the importance of character development each doubled in importance for Steel kids when they joined their Steel team. Coaching comes as no surprise as the comments provide high praise and reliance on Steel coaches. It is to be expected that Steel coaches would provide an elevated experience to youth athletes, thus endearing and deepening the importance of coach. Character Development, however, comes with fewer anecdotal comments and there are no specific trends that emerged. Repeat surveys will be telling, but for 2024 credit goes to the integration of Core Values and the role models in Steel coaches.

Reasons Kids Play Pre-Steel vs with Steel



Growth Mindset:

Definition from Carol Dweck, psychologist and author of Mindset

“Growth mindset is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication, hard work, and learning from experiences, rather than being fixed or innate.”

- 81% of Steel Kids report that they value effort more than outcomes indicating that they take pride in the process, demonstrating Growth Mindset.
- 40% of people have a growth mindset. Steel kids are cultivating growth mindset that will serve as a lifelong practice and developed skill.
- Global Study on Growth Mindset by Program for International Student Assessment says 70% of US high school kids show a growth mindset.

“In a growth mindset, challenges are exciting rather than threatening.” — Carol Dweck

WORK ETHIC + RIGOR = GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT

GROWTH MINDSET →

“positive effects on academic outcomes, mental health, and social functioning, especially when interventions are delivered to people expected to benefit the most.”

GRIT →

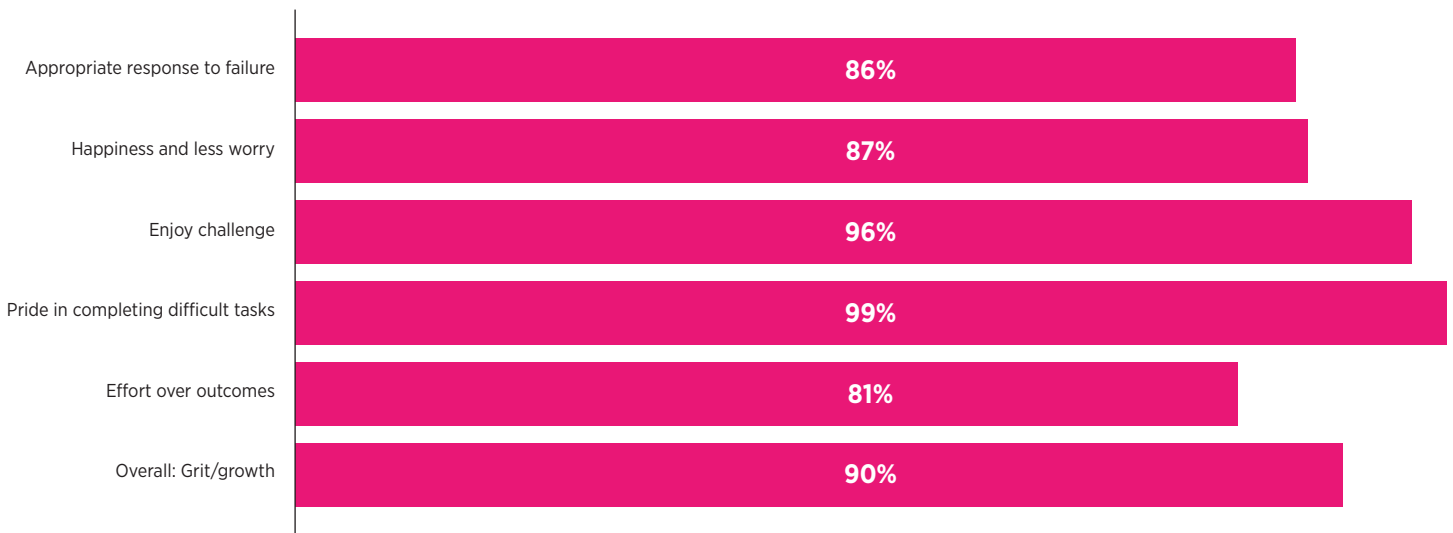
Defined as: passion and perseverance for long-term goals. “Grit is a common denominator of high achievers across very different fields,” — Angela Duckworth, psychologist and author of Grit

90% GRIT/ GROWTH MINDSET SCORE

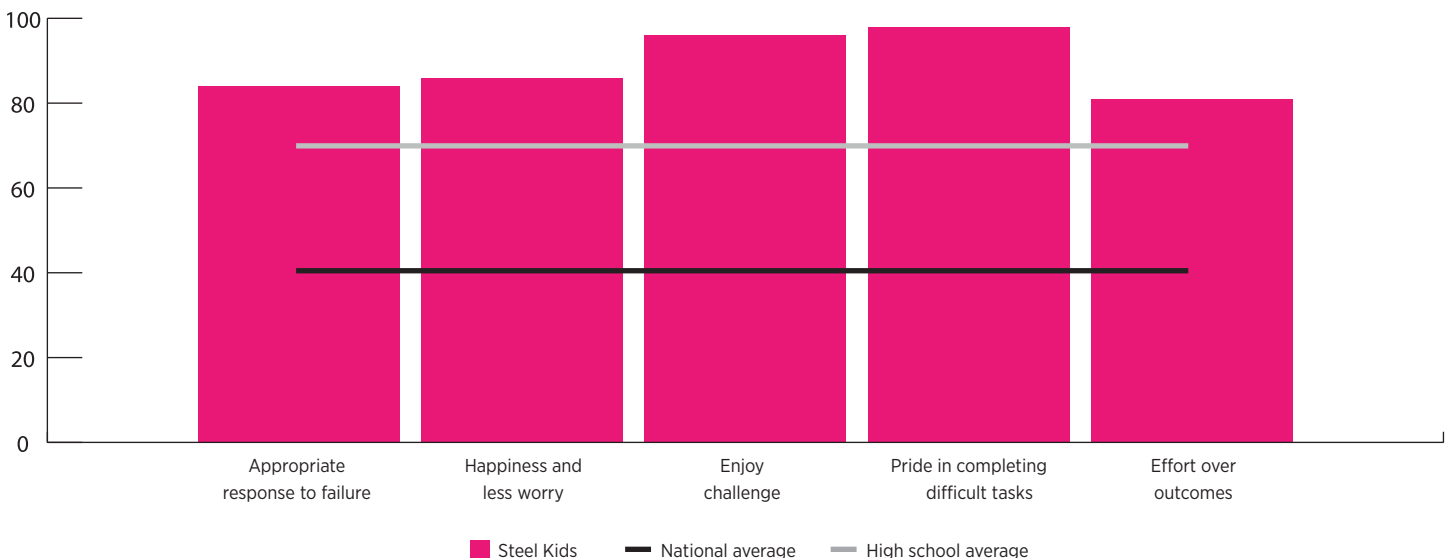
Athlete comments indicate that Growth Mindset is strongly linked to effort, persistence, and resilience. Some share that the fear of making mistakes may hold some players back, and they emphasize the belief from and act of coaches' encouragement to be uplifting factors for them to embrace challenges.

Not listed on our Grit & Growth Mindset chart below, but frequently listed in athlete comments, are qualities such as *humility* and *openness to criticism* which demonstrate a willingness to adapt and grow over time. Steel athletes are curious and hungry for feedback as well as opportunities for growth.

Grit & Growth Mindset

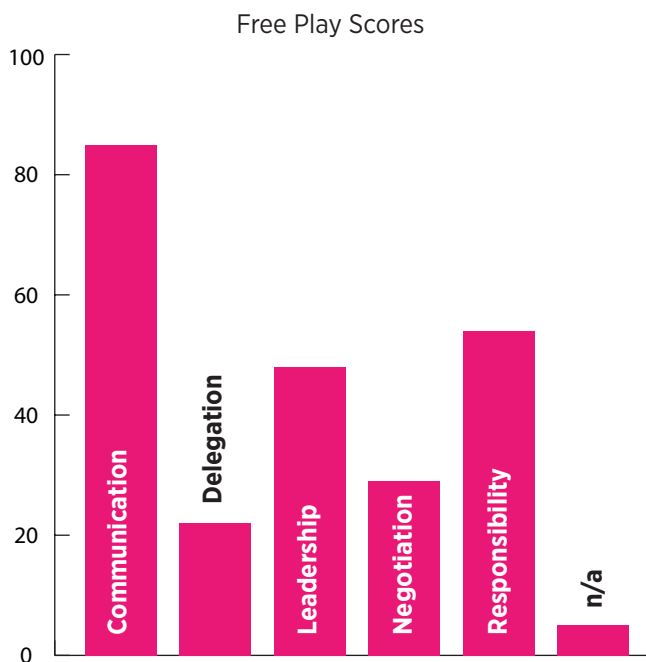


Steel vs. National Averages: Grit & Growth Mindset



Free Play

- Steel kids practice Free Play prior to each training session. During Free Play, kids have full freedom to play in whatever way they want—they self-govern, negotiate, think strategically and creatively while developing autonomy and leadership skills.
- 90% of **Steel Kids** (up from 76% in 2023) value their experience with Free Play (0 negative scores).
- When asked to select any/all skills developed through Free Play, Steel Athletes ranked the following:
 - Communication (35%) (979 overall)
 - Responsibility (22%) (626 overall)
 - Leadership (19%) (540 overall)
 - Negotiation (12%) (337 overall)
 - Delegation (9%) (244 overall)



Free Play Notes:

Athletes were asked to “select all that apply” regarding which areas of skill development they gained from Free Play. 1,358 kids answered this particular question. More data would be needed to truly understand why kids answered as they did, but we think their personalities, ages, and leadership styles significantly impact their answers. For example, a more introverted, young, less-skilled player might not utilize their delegation skills much at all, but Free Play offers an opportunity for them to focus on their Responsibility skills. Extroverted, confident, veteran players may feel that they use all of the 5 skills listed above. Free Play is a quite subjective area of measurement via self-evaluation but we know, based on Free Play research, that Free Play does, in fact, foster development in the 5 areas above whether or not athletes are acutely aware of it. In short, we know all 5 areas of Free Play are being developed while athletes are more aware of some areas over others, and it is highly dependent on their unique perspectives.

Most Common Sentiments from Athlete Comments:

- Fun/Enjoyment, specifically in unstructured play
- Freedom and Creativity
- Opportunities to take risks, learn from failure, and respond better to setbacks
- Great way to warm up and transition mentally and physically into practice
- Confidence building and Positive Team Dynamics/ Chemistry

“The fundamental paradox of play is that in order to be able to reach a variety of new goals in the long run, you have to actively turn away from goal seeking in the short run.”

— Alison Gopnik, professor and author

Free Play leads to a more supportive and inclusive culture, develops responsibility and empathy, and reduces behavior problems.

— Lenore Skenazy, President at Let Grow and Founder of the Free-Range Kids Movement

Conclusion:

The 2024 Impact Report highlights the significant and measurable influence of *The Lasorda Way* on Steel Athletes. Through dedicated trained coaching, character development, and the integration of Core Values, Steel Sports continues to foster growth beyond the game, preparing athletes not only for success on the field but also in their academic, professional, and personal lives.

Key takeaways from this year's analysis include:

- **Strong Athlete Development:** 95% of Steel Athletes report a deep understanding and application of core values, including teamwork, respect, integrity, and commitment.
- **High Academic Success:** With a 100% high school graduation rate and a 98% college matriculation rate, Steel Athletes consistently exceed national averages.
- **Positive Mental Health and Leadership Growth:** Over 88% of athletes demonstrate strong mental resilience, self-confidence, and the ability to process constructive feedback.

- **The Value of Free Play:** 90% of athletes appreciate the unstructured learning environment provided by Free Play, which fosters autonomy, responsibility, and strategic thinking.

While there has been a noted decline in leadership scores, this provides an opportunity to refocus efforts on athlete-led leadership development programs in 2025. Confidence-building also remains a priority, with strategies already in place to reinforce self-assurance through coaching and structured challenges.

Steel Sports remains committed to our **Kids First** philosophy, ensuring that each athlete's experience promotes lifelong success. Through continued investment in our coaching methods, free play, and character development, we aim to empower kids beyond the field for generations to come.

“

Our coach has always demonstrated the importance of integrity at every practice and game, regardless of the situation. I have personally witnessed how he has instilled the core values of teamwork, respect, and integrity on a consistent basis throughout the season. His approach has not only improved the team's performance but also molded the players into better individuals both on and off the field.”



Coach prioritizes teamwork by fostering an inclusive environment, models respect with his calm and constructive feedback, and consistently demonstrates integrity in his decision-making. His unwavering commitment transforms setbacks into growth opportunities, and his personalized approach ensures every player feels valued. His influence goes far beyond the field, building character and instilling life lessons in every athlete.”

“

I have personally observed their confidence, trust in each other and love for the game grow significantly that has led to better overall play on the field.”

