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# Let The Games Begin!

*Courage - Responds to God's will with Courage*

*Humility - Has the Humility to seek Christ*

*Authenticity - Lives Authentically in the world*

*Moderation - Applies Moderation to passions...including sports*

*Purposefulness - Prioritizes a life of Purposefulness*

*Service - Is dedicated to Service to others*

These are the CHAMPS virtues of a sports junkie! In each section of this book, I call out one of these virtues that resonates with that section. These virtues give us a glimpse of what victory looks like, and I guarantee that a sports junkie living these virtues is the way to a true championship. This championship may not involve confetti falling from the rafters, but something much better in the light of eternity!

This book will share my journey, stories, and wisdom that I learned along the way. The book is short, and it is short for a reason. I wanted this to be a quick read that would appeal to even those who aren't avid readers like me. I am not a theologian, and I know it, so think of this book as along the lines of the "for dummies" book series, but, in this case, for "sports junkies."

The chapters in this book are primarily written to stand alone and are arranged into six distinct sections:

### The Making of a Sports Junkie

These chapters provide insight into how I was raised and some of the unique experiences I had as I grew into adulthood. These chapters tell some interesting stories and are vital because they show that while I had about all the world could offer and had attended about every great sports competition you could name, life was still empty.

### Finding The Real MVP

These chapters tell the story of finding the key to filling the emptiness and replacing it with joy...a relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Beyond finding Jesus, these chapters address the New Evangelization and how we can bring Christ to others, even in the most unlikely places.

### A Team on a Mission

In these chapters, I tell the story of my wife Jamie's and my journey to embrace the Catholic Church's teaching on life. This journey led us to be blessed with two additional children and to be inspired to launch our homegrown ministry, the Catholics Adopt Project.

### Are You Coachable?

These chapters explore following God's will in your life. What is Christ calling you to do? I share my struggles and efforts to seek God's will and the reality that He does not always give us the easy or desired path. I also share advice on quieting your life so that you can listen.

Teammates

Success in the spiritual life for a married man is virtually impossible without a loving wife, close friends, and community. These chapters tell the story of my marriage to Jamie, of some bigger-than-life influences, of the band of brothers I am blessed to have, and of the Catholic Community that sustains our family.

Sports Junkie Fun & Reform

These chapters provide something for the sports junkie who picked up the book for the title on how my passion for sports has, at times, taken me further away from Christ. These chapters tell stories about me and others, aimed to help you enjoy sports without sacrificing a piece of your soul.

Each chapter of the book includes a Bible passage, a quote, a song lyric, and reflection questions.

- Scripture roots each chapter in God's word. This is important to me because while I am not a theologian who interprets scripture, being able to tie scripture to everyday life is helpful to spiritual growth.
- Similarly, we can find God in great quotes that make us reflect and seek God.
- While I grew up an '80s rock' n' roll fan, and meaningful lyrics were rare, I have found great support for my spiritual journey in Christian music and in some lyrical gems from the old stuff.
- Finally, taking the time to ask yourself meaningful questions and being honest with the answers is a massive catalyst to spiritual growth.

These elements are essential to making this book a spiritual guide. They allow you to go deeper into your reflections on the topics discussed and bring your personal experiences to the surface. Regardless of where you are on your spiritual journey, I am confident that this book offers insights that will deepen your faith.

Welcome! Now that you know a little bit more about this book, let me introduce myself. I am a husband to the love of my life, Jamie, and we have just celebrated 31 years of marriage as I write this. I am a father to four amazing children: Kyle, Jillian, Lila, and JP. Two are biological, two are adopted, and all four fill my heart. I am the son of Italian parents who became first-generation Americans and have lived the American dream. I like to think of myself as just someone who gets up every day and tries to do his best, but I have also been blessed with a rich and diverse corporate and entrepreneurial career. Today, I am a consultant, co-lead the Catholics Adopt Project, and am a first-time author.

I'm also a sports junkie, full of endless and sometimes useless sports knowledge. I have spent countless hours in stadiums and arenas far and wide, and of course, in front of the television watching sports. Name a significant sporting event, and chances are I have been there. Olympics, Super Bowls, Final Fours, Kentucky Derbies, Masters, Indy 500s, College Football National Championships, Wimbledons, and US Opens. I saw the first USA Dream Team in Barcelona; I was there when Bruce Jenner (now Caitlyn Jenner) won the decathlon in Montreal, and I was in the stadium for Dan Marino's one shot at Super Bowl glory. I'm not much of a sports memorabilia guy, but my office includes a signed Wayne Gretzky hockey stick he gave me in the locker room, a Drew Brees-signed football, and a helmet signed by the entire 1972

Miami Dolphins undefeated team. I can be quiet, but those who know me know that if you want to get me to talk, talk about sports.

More than that, I have often demonstrated why “fan” is short for fanatic. I agonized over my beloved Purdue Boilermakers' many March heartbreaks during a 44-year Final Four drought despite winning over 900 basketball games during that period. I savored the sweetness of victory when that drought was broken in March of 2024, and I traveled to Phoenix along with 60,000 other Boilermakers to witness the first Purdue Final Four since the one I attended as a freshman in 1980.

I live in the Atlanta area and, in 2014, became a season ticket holder for the Falcons. I had many great memories of going to games with my dad growing up, and the Falcons tickets and the Atlanta United season tickets I bought three years later were to do the same thing with my kids. Then, 28-3 in the Super Bowl happened, and my kids, who would not have cared had I never bought the season tickets and sucked them in, were heartbroken. It took Major League Soccer for the thrill of victory to erase the agony of defeat (somewhat) when we were front and center for Atlanta United's MLS Cup victory the following year.

OK, I am a sports junkie, so why am I writing a book with the goal of helping others spiritually? Because I believe that my journey is relatable to other sports junkies and regular guys looking for greater meaning in this world.

So, you may be thinking to yourself, “Why do I care about your journey?” You may think, “I want to read about the extraordinary people who achieved great success” or “I want to read about those who were martyred on the way to sainthood.” I love books like that, and while they are inspirational, they often seem out of reach

for a guy like me. This book speaks to the rest of us, the majority of us, who strive for holiness but often lose our way. We are all sinners, but we all can be saints, and I am not talking about the football team in New Orleans!

I turned 60 a few years ago, and this milestone made me reflect on my life and the impact it has had or has not had on other people. I have lost four people very close to me in the last few years: my best friend, my mom, my dad, and my father-in-law. I wrote the obituary for my friend, my mom, and my dad, and delivered words of remembrance for all four. Those experiences made me reflect on what my obituary would say and how people would remember me. More importantly, they made me think deeply about whether I was on a path to a “well done, my good and faithful servant” or something else I didn’t want to consider. That reflection has convinced me that the only thing that matters is how I impact other people for the better: my family, my friends, my acquaintances, my enemies, and you who are holding this book.

While I would love for you to pick up this book and read it cover to cover, you may not have the time with all the demands of modern life. Even if that is the case, pick out a section or two that sparks your interest, and I promise it will nourish your soul in some way and feed your spiritual journey. Enjoy, and let the games begin!