



## Play Like A Champion Today ® Bands



The goal of the Play Like A Champion Today ® (PLACT) band is to focus attention on virtue among CYO athletes, coaches and families. CYO Athletics strives to develop the "whole" athlete, whom we pray God will strengthen in the Cardinal Virtues of Fortitude, Justice, Prudence and Temperance, manifesting in good sportsmanship, hard work, dedication, and respect for teammates and competing players.

CYO coaches are crucial to the effectiveness of this effort – by setting the right example, communicating clear expectations, and incorporating supportive messaging throughout the season on and off the field/court. Playing like a Champion isn't always noticed, praised or rewarded by others, so these should not be the primary motivations. What's more, we are competing with powerful societal messaging that being a star performer and scoring points are the ultimate goals, no matter whether players behave virtuously. However, PLACT bands can be both a reminder to ourselves and an outward sign that in CYO Athletics, we have our priorities straight!

Here are some examples of suitable justifications related to Cardinal virtues for awarding a PLACT band:

- **Fortitude:** exerting maximum physical effort or focus, overcoming adversity, displaying courage, positive focus on/achievement of goals.
- **Justice:** care and concern for all involved in the activity
  - For teammates: encouraging others through supportive behavior, such as high fives or a pat on the back, being kind and inclusive on and off the field/court.
  - For competing players: helping them up off the ground if they fall, extending congratulations for quality play, admitting fault such as having touched the ball last before it went out of bounds.
  - Outward respect and support of referee(s).
- **Prudence:** making wise decisions. Not reacting to overly aggressive or physical play, trash talking. Taking responsibility for teammates and holding ourselves accountable for team play and results.
- **Temperance:** maintaining perspective on winning and losing, remaining enthusiastic and positive throughout the game, playing and competing joyfully, creating fun environment for competition.

From our experience and that of the many CYO coaches who have observed the effectiveness of PLACT bands first-hand, these are suggested best practices:

- Talk with your team at practice and games about virtues and CYO values. Observe players exhibiting virtue, praise it, and point it out to others. Reinforcing these values helps athletes take ownership of them.
- Ask them what they are seeing. Encourage players to do the same with each other, and opponents.
- Wear the bands yourself so they are visible (this also helps ensure you don't forget to bring them to each game!) and keep them in your coaching bag.
- Prior to your game/match, check in with the coach of the team you are competing with to discuss any special considerations – a player who has already received the award and you want to “spread it around,” player(s) that they should consider, a coach forgot their bands and you want to strategize how to handle it, .
- During the game/match, ask your players what they are seeing on the court/field. Who is reflecting virtues and CYO values on either team? Make sure they give concrete examples so you can ensure they clearly understand the band's purpose – this is not a talent or achievement award for the other team's star player, or whoever scores the most points.
- For the actual exchange, gather the teams briefly in a circle after the postgame handshakes and have your designated team representative(s) share which player(s) they would like to recognize and why. It is fine to recognize multiple players who exhibited good sportsmanship, even if only awarding one the band.
- Exchange can and should take place off the field so that the next games can begin on time.
- If the team you are competing with does not have a band, the exchange should still take place. Have their team acknowledge your player and your team acknowledge their player. Coaches can exchange bands or provide one from their own supply later.
- For awarding to your own team, you can incorporate what is being experienced in your practices, too.
- Jot down notes about what is said about players as this is good info for end of season event.