

GIRLS AT BAT PROGRAM EVALUATION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In 2017 Jays Care Foundation launched Girls At Bat – an introductory baseball/softball program focused on engaging anyone identifying as a girl, aged 7-16, who may face barriers to accessing sport. Through partnerships with trusted community organizations and First Nations, Girls At Bat is designed to create spaces that empower and center the leadership and voices of girls. Using baseball/softball as the vehicle, the program seeks to enhance four main objects: connection, courage, leadership, and love of sport.

2021 NUMBERS



Partnered with **30** community-based organizations and Indigenous communities



Ran programming across **9** provinces & territories



Helped **608** girls return to the diamond



Trained over **200** coaches in girl-centered programming



*“Girls at Bat helps you make new friends and interact with other girls your own age, from different cultures and backgrounds”
– Girls At Bat Athlete*

DID YOU KNOW?

By age 16, **1 in 3 girls** will drop out of sports compared to only 1 in 10 boys. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, **1 in 4** girls are NOT committed to returning to sport post COVID-19.¹

WHY IS THIS THE CASE?

According to the Rally Report (2020), girls face several unique barriers when it comes to accessing meaningful sport experiences. These range from external factors like **cost, accessibility,** and **quality of sport** programming to internal barriers including, **low confidence, negative body image, perceived lack of skills,** and **not feeling welcome.** Combined these barriers have affected girls’ (dis) engagement in sport, shaping their desires to stay, play, and be physically active.²

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

FOCUS ON CONNECTION & BELONGING

Girls report that social connection is a top benefit of sport and that it often leads to increased effort and performance in sport.³

POSITIVE COACHING

Research shows that girls value coaches who treat them with respect, create positive team dynamics, provide positive feedback, instill confidence, stay positive, and allow girls to make mistakes.³

REINFORCE EFFORT OVER OUTCOME

For girls, sport being too competitive, perceived lack of skill, and low confidence all contribute to high dropout rates over time. To prevent this, try rewarding positive effort over outcome to instill the confidence and competence needed to keep girls in sport.³

¹ Canadian Women & Sport (2021). COVID Alert: Pandemic Impact on Girls in Sport.

² Canadian Women & Sport (2020). THE RALLY REPORT: Encouraging Action to Improve Sport for Women and Girls.

³ Canadian Women & Sport (2020). SHE BELONGS: Building Social Connection For Lasting Participation in Sport.

EVALUATION PLAN

In 2019, Jays Care, in partnership with Baseball Canada, enlisted the help of University of Ottawa to undertake a program evaluation of Girls At Bat. The goal was to examine current trends and themes surrounding the experiences of athletes in the program. The research was performed by Dr. Marijke Taks and her team, in partnership with Jays Care’s Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.

Data for this evaluation was collected in the following ways:

SURVEYS: 341 athletes + 25 coaches + 81 parents & guardians

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: 3 coaches

FOCUS GROUPS: 4 groups: 17 athletes

FINDINGS

GIRLS AT BAT IS AN INCLUSIVE SPACE WHERE GIRLS WANT TO PLAY & BE ACTIVE

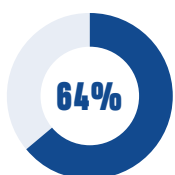
Survey findings suggested that Girls At Bat programming creates a sporting environment where girls feel welcome, included, and want to be active. 83% of athletes reported that ‘they felt like they could be themselves’ when at Girls At Bat, with 88% reporting ‘they wanted to play and be active’ when at Girls At Bat programming. These sentiments were reinforced throughout the focus groups with athletes describing Girls At Bat as ‘an encouraging and positive space’ and ‘a fun way to be active’.



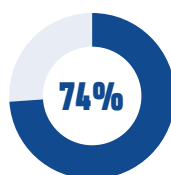
“My favourite thing about Girls At Bat is that it is all girls and I could play freely, and I tried a new sport as well.” – Girls At Bat Athlete

GIRLS AT BAT FOSTERS AN INTEREST IN BEING ACTIVE AND PLAYING SPORTS BEYOND THE PROGRAM

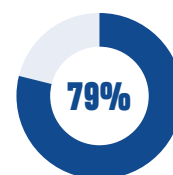
When athletes were asked about their intentions to participate in future sport programs after Girls At Bat programming, survey responses indicated the following:



Want to sign up for other sports



Are now more interested in baseball



Are excited to join again next year

In similar fashion, **85%** of parents/guardians indicated their child(ren) expressed strong interest in joining additional sport programming as a result of their participation in Girls At Bat.

“Girls At Bat allows girls to gain confidence in themselves and in playing sports. They get to connect with other girls that they normally wouldn’t. My daughter wants us to sign her up for baseball next year because of this program!” – Girls At Bat Parent

GIRLS AT BAT COACHES ARE CREATING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE GIRLS CAN CONNECT AND FEEL SUPPORTED

Two key themes that emerged from athlete focus groups when asked about the positive aspects of Girls At Bat included: **supportive coaches** and the **ability to make new friends**. Many girls noted how they liked when coaches created little competitiveness between athletes and instead created a feeling of being on ‘one big team’. This sense of ‘team’ may be attributed to why 82% of athletes reported they connected with teammates at Girls At Bat programming.



“At Girls At Bat they taught me that even if you make a mistake its okay and that if you don’t know how to do something practice and you will get it... and guess what I did!” – Girls At Bat Athlete

NEXT STEPS

Based on these findings, Jays Care is more dedicated than ever to create safe(r) and more inclusive spaces for athletes participating in Girls At Bat programming. In 2022, we plan to do so by:

1. Continuing to provide and expand training on girl-centred design and approaches, ensuring program plans are intentionally designed to meet athletes’ needs and interests.
2. Obtaining more data on the experiences of BI-POC and newcomer athletes in Girls At Bat programming to better understand their experiences and the effectiveness of current approaches.
3. Exploring and understanding the barriers 2-spirit, trans, & non-binary youth face in accessing and participating in sport.
4. Continuing to involve athletes and key stakeholders in the design, delivery, and evaluation of Girls At Bat programming to improve the effectiveness of current approaches.