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## Girls with Game: Sport and Community Development Strategies

**Keywords:** community building, event management, event leveraging, sport development,  
women in sport, youth sport

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### **Abstract**

This case focuses on the Little League Softball® World Series (LLSWS) and the potential interest and growth of youth softball. The case outlines current trends of and highlights potential opportunities to grow the game after a 2020 decision to move the LLSWS from Portland, Oregon, where it had been hosted for over 25 years, to Greenville, North Carolina. This case challenges students to: 1) examine how sports organizations must be intentional about growing a sport; 2) develop new solutions to involve the local community; 3) find new and effective ways to promote a girls' sport (and an international event at the local level) in a manner that advances women in sport. It is intended for use in strategic management, event management, and/or contemporary sport issues courses. The case provides instructors with the opportunity to highlight the importance of advancing diversity in youth sport, with an emphasis on community impact, and effective strategies to promote women in sport.

**18 Girls with Game: Sport and Community Development Strategies**

19 Natasha, born and raised in Greenville, North Carolina was thrilled on February 19<sup>th</sup>,  
20 2020, when it was announced that Stallings Stadium at Elm Street Park in Greenville would  
21 serve as the new home of the Little League Softball® World Series (LLSWS) for the next five  
22 years. Since 1974, Alpenrose Dairy, in Portland, Oregon hosted the annual tournament. Yet in  
23 2019, Little League International president and CEO, Stephen D. Keener, notified local Little  
24 League officials that it was leaving Alpenrose after the land that hosted the tournament was sold  
25 to a Seattle-area company (Njus, 2019). Being a native of Greenville, which has always been  
26 considered a “baseball town,” Natasha felt this was wonderful opportunity to share her love for  
27 softball with her hometown community. A new mom, and working for a local marketing agency,  
28 Natasha wanted to give back to the sport and her hometown.

29 Natasha’s mother always talked about how grateful she was for the opportunity to play  
30 sports after Title IX was passed in 1972. Natasha’s mother made a point to make sure her  
31 daughter took advantage of the numerous opportunities she had to stay physically active through  
32 sport. With her mother and biggest advocate by her side, Natasha learned softball through Little  
33 League Softball. She was fortunate to play throughout high school and even earned a college  
34 scholarship to play at nearby East Carolina University (ECU). Natasha knew Greenville and the  
35 sport better than most. She hoped 5-10 years in the future her new daughter would get to see and  
36 experience the LLSWS being played in her backyard, as well. For that to happen, Natasha knew  
37 Greenville would need to showcase the LLSWS in a way that would convince Little League  
38 International to extend the five-year agreement initially signed with the City of Greenville in  
39 2020.

40 *Economic Impact of Youth Sport*

41           Between 2010 and 2017 the U.S. youth sport industry rose 55% to be worth an estimated  
42 \$15 billion (Sparvero & Dixon, 2019). Although, the average U.S. household income of families  
43 is \$59,039, the average household income of families whose children participate in formalized  
44 youth sports is \$90,908 (Aspen Institute, 2021). Youth sport spending continues to climb and has  
45 a large impact on the U.S. economy and households while impacting who plays youth sport and  
46 who does not (e.g., Hyman, 2012; O'Brien et al., 2022). The expectation for travel for youth  
47 sport also comes at a large expense that positively impacts communities while negatively  
48 impacting parents' pocketbooks.

49           Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the contract began in 2021 with only 10 teams from the  
50 United States and was "expected to generate more than \$750,000 in tourism spending" (Satira,  
51 2021). Gray Williams, executive director of Play Greenville, NC, the sport tourism branch of  
52 The Greenville-Pitt County Conventions & Visitors Bureau (Visit Greenville, NC) stated:

53           In 2022, with 12 teams from around the world, we expect an even larger economic  
54 impact. Right now, we're estimating that at \$1.2 million dollars. This will boost our  
55 economy for local businesses, help to create local jobs, and most importantly help us in  
56 the recovery period we are entering after the COVID-19 crisis. (Satira, 2021)

57           It was clear from an economic standpoint that Greenville had much to gain. But the  
58 potential psychic income, or the emotional and psychological benefit residents perceive  
59 (Crompton, 2004), for the community and residents from hosting an international event was also  
60 significant. Steve Weathers, president, and CEO of the Greenville ENC Alliance, said:

61           While the tournament itself will bring tourism dollars to our community, you really can't  
62 put a cost estimate on the worldwide recognition that our community will receive. It's  
63 truly a priceless opportunity that's just as important as the financial gain. With

64 international media and sports coverage expected over the next five years, the tournament  
65 will put Greenville on a national platform. It's an opportunity for us to share the story  
66 that Greenville is a great place. (Satira, 2021)

67 Natasha knew this was an important opportunity for her hometown, and the resources were in  
68 place to capitalize on it. For over a decade, Greenville Little League hosted the Tournament of  
69 State Champions for baseball at Elm Street Park, where teams could earn a spot in the Little  
70 League Baseball® World Series (Weingartz & Warner, 2018). While Greenville had a history of  
71 successfully hosting a Little League Baseball tournament, Natasha was still surprised that it  
72 would be softball and the LLSWS that would be hosted in Greenville. The volunteers and  
73 support through Greenville Little League were available, but she also knew there would be an  
74 adjustment for fans and community members to embrace her sport of softball. She was  
75 committed to doing all she could for her community.

### 76 *Growth of Softball*

77 The sport of softball was growing, and it was important that Greenville and LLSWS  
78 capitalize on that. When the announcement was made, Natasha started to do her research and  
79 sought out opportunities to volunteer at LLSWS. Softball had been increasing in participation  
80 numbers before COVID-19. Softball was officially added to the Olympic Games in 1996 in  
81 Atlanta but was dropped (along with baseball) from the 2008 Olympics. Softball (and baseball)  
82 were temporarily back for the Tokyo 2020 Games but will not be a part of the 2024 Olympic  
83 Games in Paris. Natasha along with many others are hopeful softball will return in the 2028  
84 Olympics in Los Angeles. Softball's Olympic future is unknown and growing the game on a  
85 global scale is becoming increasingly important. For ages 6 through 12, softball experienced a  
86 20.4% increase in participation from 2018 to 2019, with 416,000 kids playing in 2019. For ages

87 13 through 17, softball experienced a 12.2% increase in participation, with 408,000 kids playing  
88 in 2019. While there was growth, softball lost 8,000 participants in 2019 in the transition from  
89 elementary school to middle school (Aspen Institute, 2021). Post COVID-19, according to the  
90 Aspen Institute, 29% of parents reported that their child is not interested in sports, with  
91 approximately 3 in 10 kids who previously played sports, indicated they are no longer interested.

92         Girls and women began to play softball in the 1930s and over the next four decades, the  
93 sport began to reach local high schools with the passage of Title IX in 1974. Today youth  
94 fastpitch softball has grown into a top five youth sport in the United States (Aspen Institute,  
95 2021). There are multiple leagues and tournaments for youth softball that are competing to  
96 attract the sports' most competitive players. Leagues such as, Premier Girls Fastpitch (premium  
97 and platinum divisions, founded in 2009) and USA Softball formally known as Amateur Softball  
98 Association (ASA) Softball (founded in 1933) are two of the most competitive leagues in the  
99 United States. Both organizations hold tournaments year-round; in fact, you can find more than  
100 100 tournaments throughout the year, from Hawaii to Florida. While the vast participation  
101 opportunities are a positive entity for the sport itself, this also creates a competitive clash for the  
102 LLSWS, with summer qualifying tournaments (regionally and state-wide) to the culminating 12  
103 team international championship.

104         Both the Premier Girls Fastpitch and USA Softball have used their popularity, reputation,  
105 and expanded tournament format to become a direct line for players to National Collegiate  
106 Athletic Association (NCAA) softball programs. Many feel the best players in the country are  
107 forgoing local Little League programs for these more select programs that offer more exposure to  
108 college recruiters and travel opportunities. The combined popularity and increase in participation  
109 have made softball the fastest growing sport in the NCAA, according to the Department of

110 Education. In 2003 – 2004 not one softball program in the NCAA reported more than \$1 million  
111 in revenue. By 2018, 70 teams reported revenues of \$1 million or more, making it the fastest  
112 growing sport in the NCAA with a 339% increase (Solano, 2021). NCAA softball is now a  
113 revenue sport (Berri, 2019).

114 Softball was growing, but Natasha also knew the challenge for girls' sport have never  
115 disappeared, even 50 years after the passage of Title IX. She also learned from a 2020 Women's  
116 Sports Foundation (WSF) commissioned national survey, that girls "were more likely to have  
117 never played (43.1% girls vs. 34.5% boys) and less likely to be currently playing sports (36.4%  
118 girls vs. 45.6% boys) compared to boys, and sport drop-out rates within the sample were  
119 significantly higher among girls than boys" (Zarrett et al., 2020, p. 4). What was so shocking to  
120 Natasha, was the numerous benefits sport participation offered for young girls. Everything from  
121 increased confidence and higher self-esteem, a more positive body image, better overall physical  
122 health, lower rates of obesity, better grades in school, a higher graduation rate, and a greater  
123 likelihood to attend college (Powers et al., 2020). Natasha also knew that parents played a huge  
124 role in how females view sport, and the lasting impact early socialization could have (Dixon et  
125 al., 2008). It was vital for Natasha to role model to her young daughter the value of sport and do  
126 whatever she could to support the LLSWS for the benefit of other young girls in her community.

## 127 **2022 LLSWS**

128 In the Summer of 2022, Natasha finally had her chance to volunteer and see 12 teams  
129 arrive in Greenville for the LLSWS. Natasha was just one of 100+ to serve in various capacities  
130 from concessions, hospitality, parking, and grounds crew (Gruner, 2022a). With the "Girls with  
131 Game" tagline seen throughout the stadium, Natasha became even more inspired. The Girls with  
132 Game Initiative was launched in 2019 by Little League International with the goal of inspiring

133 “the future generation of female participants at every level” (Little League, 2019). As part of that  
134 initiative, Natasha proudly observed the first all-female grounds crew prepare the field at  
135 Stallings Stadium during the series. Sixteen women from around the country traveled to  
136 Greenville to make history (Weinfuss, 2022). Cheryl Miller, who just a year prior was the *only*  
137 woman to serve on 2021 LLSWS grounds crew, said:

138         We want to show these girls that you can do anything. It doesn’t matter who you are or  
139         where you’re from, you come out here and do these jobs, and maybe when your softball  
140         career ends, you can still stay involved. Because a lot of these girls played softball, and  
141         this is their way of staying involved and connected to the sport. (Little League, 2022b)

142 The female grounds crew was not the only success of the 2022 LLSWS. Youth softball games  
143 began to see an increase in viewership on television, as well. It was estimated that 193,000  
144 viewers tuned in on ESPN2 to watch the LLSWS in 2016 and by 2022 the LLSWS was the most  
145 watched in history with a 177% increase. The championship game drew 280,000 viewers in the  
146 12 p.m. time slot, then brought in an additional 256,000 viewers in the re-air on Monday night on  
147 ESPN2 for a combined audience of 536,000 viewers (McLeod, 2022).

148         The 2022 Little League Softball® World Series was ESPN’s most watched since it  
149         expanded coverage of the tournament in 2017, according to Nielsen. It averaged 294,000  
150         viewers across ESPN and ESPN2, up 19 percent from last year and up 21 percent from  
151         2019. The increases occurred despite losing the primetime Little League Softball® World  
152         Series Championship Game window due to inclement weather (Rajan, 2022).

153 The momentum for softball to grow, and the LLSWS in Greenville, NC was evident. But  
154 Natasha knew intentional efforts would have to be made for softball and the LLSWS to be a  
155 premier event with similar viewership and impact as the Little League Baseball® World Series.



156 ***Little League International Background***

157           The 2022 Little League® Baseball World Series averaged 2.49 million viewers for the  
158 mid-afternoon broadcast on ABC (Shea, 2022). Founded in 1939, Little League is the world’s  
159 largest organized youth sports program, with millions of players from more than 80 countries,  
160 and more than one million adult volunteers in every U.S. state. In 1947, the first Little League  
161 Baseball World Series was played in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Williamsport is also home to  
162 Little League headquarters office. It was not until over a quarter-century later that Little League  
163 started a pilot program in 1974 to gauge interest in girls’ softball from local leagues across the  
164 country. The initiative worked and more than 50,000 girls play the game across 460 Little  
165 League communities. Little League quickly recognized the success, and with only three months  
166 of planning, the inaugural LLSWS was played (Little League, 2022a).

167           Williamsport has a long history and tradition of hosting the event. The LLSWS event in  
168 Greenville, however, offers different geographical and cultural highlights, as well as diverse  
169 demographics of fans and volunteers. In 2022 the LLSWS fans could try local cuisine at the food  
170 trucks parked outside the stadium and activities set up at a local recreational center (Gruner,  
171 2022b). The local Filipino community not only greeted the Asia-Pacific Region team from the  
172 Philippines upon their arrival in Greenville, but enthusiastically cheered on the team that traveled  
173 over 8,000 miles (Grizzard, 2022)<sup>1</sup>. It was clear to Natasha that Greenville would have to  
174 continue to find ways for the local community to embrace the event.

175 ***Greenville, NC***

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.reflector.com/crowd-pleasing-home-or-away-teams-fueled-by-elm-street-fans/article\\_5c1049c4-380c-53fb-b944-973c412005b5.html](https://www.reflector.com/crowd-pleasing-home-or-away-teams-fueled-by-elm-street-fans/article_5c1049c4-380c-53fb-b944-973c412005b5.html)

176 Originally founded as Martinsborough in 1771, the city now named Greenville, sits on  
177 the south bank of the Tar River, roughly 90 minutes east of Raleigh, NC, and 90 minutes west of  
178 the Atlantic coast. From its humble beginnings to a thriving community, Greenville has become  
179 the 11<sup>th</sup> largest city in North Carolina with a population of nearly 94,000 and is an excellent  
180 choice to serve as the host city for the LLSWS (The City of Greenville, NC, 2022).

181 Natasha also knew Greenville, like Williamsport, had a similar history with the town  
182 being viewed as “baseball town.” Greenville is home to many different youth sports, privately  
183 owned training facilities, and two baseball Little Leagues, including the Greenville North State  
184 Little League Team that made a LLWS baseball run in 2017. It is also home to a large Division I  
185 (DI) University, East Carolina University (ECU), whose arguably most successful sport is  
186 baseball. The ECU Baseball team has made regular appearances in the NCAA Tournament. As  
187 of 2022, they have the most NCAA tournament appearances without a College World Series  
188 appearance and fans consistently rate ECU as having one of the top college baseball stadiums  
189 atmospheres (Cavadi, 2019). While 3,000 fans can sit in bleachers at ECU’s baseball stadium,  
190 the grassy area off the left field fence, affectionally known as the Jungle, hosts up to 2,000 vocal  
191 energized fans. ECU also provided housing for all LLSWS players in the university dorms, just a  
192 short distance from Stallings Field at Elm Street Park. Additionally, the university’s softball  
193 stadium served as a site for an informal game between team Italy and Canada, after both teams  
194 were eliminated early in the tournament.

195 It was clear to Natasha that the potential for energy on ECU’s campus for baseball could  
196 be leveraged to support the LLSWS. But a very strategic well-thought-out plan that utilized  
197 ECU’s proximity to the event was needed to promote future LLSWS community support, to  
198 continue to develop and grow the sport of softball. The LLSWS stakeholders were going to need

199 to find new and effective ways to engage the community while also making intentional efforts to  
200 advance women in sport.

201 **The Dilemma**

202 After being hosted in Portland for over 25 years, the 2020 decision to move the LLSWS  
203 to Greenville, NC provides an important opportunity to advance the game of softball.

204 Combining this decision with the current youth sport trends, softball trends, and available  
205 resources in Greenville, the case provides an ideal opportunity to examine the intentional efforts  
206 that can be developed to promote and grow girls' softball. It also highlights how this can  
207 promote diversity in youth sport, advance women's sports, and can positively impact the  
208 community.

209

**Teaching Notes**

211 This case study provides an opportunity for students to better understand the challenges  
212 and opportunities girls' sports often face. The ability to identify opportunities to grow, market,  
213 and expand a sport are provided for students in the case. This case focuses on the Little League  
214 Softball® World Series, while being housed under the Little League International umbrella has  
215 its advantages, the case highlights how a major change (i.e., moving the LLSWS from Portland  
216 to Greenville) provides an opportunity to grow the sport of softball. The case is especially timely  
217 due to the movement of the LLSWS to a new location and it being post COVID-19, where many  
218 youth sports organizations will likely struggle in increasing diversity and overall participation  
219 (Warner & Martin, 2020). With the recent 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Title IX, this case also  
220 provides an opportunity for students to think about how changes are needed across our sport  
221 systems to make sport opportunities more accessible for females. While much of the media will  
222 highlight professional and college sport, the grassroots level and youth sport should not be  
223 overlooked. It too can provide an important economic impact for a community. This case  
224 provides an opportunity for students to: 1) examine how sports organizations must be intentional  
225 about growing a sport; 2) develop new and effective solutions to involve the local community; 3)  
226 find new ways to promote a girls' sport (and an international event at the local level) in a manner  
227 that promotes the advancement of women in sport.

**Instructor Use and Target Audience**

229 This case was written for use in both undergraduate and graduate strategic management,  
230 event management, and/or contemporary sport issues courses. It is recommended that this case  
231 be used during units focused on youth sport, community building, strategic management, or sport  
232 development. It provides instructors with the opportunity to emphasize how women's sport can

233 grow with thoughtful, strategic, and well-informed ideas that begin at the youth level. The case  
234 also highlights how intentional efforts must be made to promote girls' sport.

235         Given the numerous ways courses are delivered (e.g., on-campus, online, lectures, etc.),  
236 first, discussion questions are provided for the instructor by topic area. Second, there are  
237 exercises, assignments, and suggested activities that can be completed individually, in groups, or  
238 as facilitator-led activities provided by topic area:

- 239             1. Community and Event Strategy
  - 240                 a. Community Development
  - 241                 b. Event Management
- 242             2. Women in Sport/Diversity in Sport/Sport Development

### 243 **Learning Outcomes**

244         Instructors who assign this case and implement the activities associated with this case in their  
245 curriculum will find their students able to do the following:

- 246         • Understand and develop media components aimed at increasing community value, that  
247         include, a social media campaign and volunteer recruitment strategies essential to  
248         community development.
- 249         • Identify and create elements related to event management, including, community  
250         outreach, the event experience, elements of a marketing plan, and sponsorship.
- 251         • Generate unique strategies to promote a youth sport aimed at increasing participants and  
252         LLSWS fans.
- 253         • Formulate new approaches to promote the advancement of diversity in youth sport  
254         (gender, ethnicity, inequities).

### 255 **Community and Event Strategy**

256           This case presents the opportunity communities often have when selected to serve as a  
257 host for an event. In many instances, cities must not only successfully manage the event, but also  
258 must demonstrate unique and distinct community support to help retain the event. In this case,  
259 Little League signed a 5-year contract with the city of Greenville in 2020. Undoubtedly, the  
260 cancellation of the 2020 LLSWS, due to Covid, provided some unanticipated challenges with  
261 international teams not being able to participate. For Greenville to continue to serve as the on-  
262 going home of the LLSWS and have the contract with Little League extended, the city must find  
263 way to demonstrate the community support (volunteers, fans, government stakeholder, etc.)  
264 necessary to make Greenville an exceptional choice. Thus, this case gives students the  
265 opportunity to think critically about how to leverage an international event at the local level to  
266 create value for the community. Although Natasha is fictitious, the case draws upon facts and  
267 data from various news sources, providing students with a realistic and timely opportunity.

### 268           *Community Development*

269           For instructors that wish to have students consider the social value of the event for the  
270 community Chalip (2006) and Misener & Schulenkorf (2016) and would be excellent  
271 prerequisite reading for students prior to analyzing the case. These readings would help focus  
272 students on the community member benefits of hosting the events. Little League volunteers are  
273 essential to the organization and somewhat of a unique human resource that many sport  
274 organizations depend upon. The LLSWS is no different. While the Super Bowl may depend upon  
275 10,000 volunteers and the LLSWS only 100, nonetheless volunteers are essential for the success  
276 of both events. For instructors that wish to highlight the volunteer aspect to host the event,  
277 instructors should consider assignment Kerwin et al. (2015) and/or Warner et al. (2011).  
278 Understanding both the social value and the importance of community involvement through

279 volunteering at the LLSWS, are fundamental to event leveraging and community development. It  
280 is also key to building a compelling case that Greenville is an engaged community that should  
281 continue to serve as host for LLSWS in future years.

282 The following questions could be used as a discussion guide on lessons related to event  
283 leveraging and community development:

- 284 1. How can Natasha show that the LLSWS is valuable and important for the City of  
285 Greenville?
- 286 2. What steps would you suggest community stakeholders need to take to maximize the  
287 benefits associated with hosting the event?
- 288 3. What groups should be targeted for volunteer recruitment? And how would you  
289 suggest engaging these groups? (i.e., What tactics would you use?)
- 290 4. What are some yearlong activities that you would suggest the city of Greenville  
291 employ to maximize the exposure of the LLSWS?

292 Suggested assignment:

- 293 1. Students can be asked to take on the role of Natasha and prepare a memorandum  
294 (estimated 2 pages) to the mayor of Greenville. At a minimum, the memorandum  
295 should address the following: What are the possible opportunities for the city of  
296 Greenville to host the LLSWS? How (with her local marketing agency background),  
297 would you suggest the city promote the event to residents? Should any programs or  
298 event be held leading up to the event? If so, what? And why? And at whose expense?  
299 Describe any cross-leverage that might be possible.
- 300 2. Students are asked to prepare a post-event press release highlighting the successes  
301 and community engagement in the 2022 LLSWS.

- 302 3. After reading Misener and Schulenkorf (2016) students should outline what an asset-  
303 based community development (ABCD) approach for the LLSWS would look like  
304 (i.e., students should describe all six steps involved in this approach).
- 305 4. After reading Kerwin et al. (2015) and/or Warner et al. (2011) students should  
306 develop a volunteer recruitment ad based on the findings on small-scale sport event  
307 volunteers.
- 308 5. Students are asked to create a brief yearlong media plan aimed at engaging and  
309 creating awareness of the LLSWS among local community members. Students should  
310 start with post-event and suggest possible media release topics and/or campaigns that  
311 could be used throughout the year and leading up to the next LLSWS.

### 312 *Event Management Strategy*

313 Local sports events have a significant role in generating revenue for the host community  
314 in addition to the sport organization; it is a collaborative effort between sport organizations and  
315 local host committee, and in this case, a university as well. Building community support and  
316 revenue generation can be tremendously challenging, but the rewards can go beyond financial  
317 gain. Arguably one of the fastest growing sectors of the sport industry is sport tourism. In the  
318 2021 State of the Industry Annual Report, Sports ETA (2021) estimated that sports tourism  
319 generated \$39.7 billion, with a “total economic impact of \$91.8 billion, supporting 635,000 full-  
320 time, and part-time jobs and generating \$12.9 billion in taxes” (Reau, 2022). This case provides  
321 students with the opportunity to discover the sport tourism impact of an international event on  
322 the local Greenville community.

323 For courses and lectures concerned with event management, it is suggested that  
324 instructors use book chapters (e.g., Aicher et al., 2019; Benedict & Anderson, 2021) focused on



325 event planning, event marketing, event experience, consumer behavior, event bidding, and  
326 sponsorship as supportive readings for students. These texts provide a synopsis of major  
327 components as it pertains to event management and would help guide student-led discussions  
328 and/or assignments connected to the case study. If assigned as supported readings, students will  
329 have a strong foundation of event management, that includes timely theoretical insights  
330 involving real-world application (e.g., sponsorship activation, fan engagement, volunteer  
331 recruitment, etc.).

332 For instructors that wish to focus more on the role of event management and sport  
333 development, the case study provides an ideal backdrop to engage both undergraduate and  
334 graduate students in a discussion regarding strategies to promote and market a local girls' sport  
335 aimed at increasing community participants and LLSWS fan involvement. For instructors that  
336 wish to highlight sport tourism, marketing, and leadership in event management, instructors may  
337 consider assigning Mumcu and Mahoney (2018) as a prerequisite reading. The case provides an  
338 overview of the necessity for strategic management and collaboration between community  
339 stakeholders and marketing personnel, essential for a city to host a large sporting event. Here the  
340 use of the Decision Tree Method outlined by Mumcu and Mahoney (2018) provides students  
341 with the background knowledge to identify and analyze various outcomes of hosting and bidding  
342 for an event.

343 The following questions could be used as a discussion guide on lessons related to event  
344 management and strategy:

- 345 1. What role does the local community play in the development and growth of the LLSWS?
- 346 2. Name the stakeholders in this event. How can LLSWS and Greenville work together to  
347 meet the needs of all the stakeholders in the event?

- 348 3. Sport tourism requires collaboration between the host destination (i.e., Greenville, NC)  
349 and the sport organization (i.e., Little League International). How do both organizations  
350 work together to optimize the quality of the event and the experiences for the sport  
351 tourists?
- 352 4. What are some event strategies the LLSWS planning committee can use to develop  
353 community among their followers?
- 354 5. To promote future event success, how can the LLSWS planning committee keep fans  
355 engaged year-round?

356 Suggested assignments:

- 357 1. Currently, the city of Greenville will host the LLSWS until 2025. Using the Decision  
358 Tree Method (Mumcu & Mahoney, 2020) students are asked to prepare a professional  
359 bid, using two possible outcomes: Event A (Greenville, NC) and Event B (Alternative  
360 City, State). Students should prepare a host city bid using a PowerPoint presentation,  
361 identifying goals and objectives of hosting the event. The presentation also should  
362 include current fit in the marketplace, monetary gains, risks, stakeholders, attraction for  
363 sponsors, and international exposure. Instructors could divide a smaller class in half  
364 (Event A and Event B), creating a fun competition. An alternative would be for students  
365 to be divided into smaller groups (3-5) and prepare a professional bid that allows them to  
366 evaluate both Event A and Event B. The alternative city and event can be chosen by the  
367 instructor.
- 368 2. After reading the case, students in small groups should prepare a SWOT analysis for the  
369 LLSWS. For undergraduate students it is suggested that instructors can have students  
370 conduct the analysis based on the information provided in the case, while graduate

- 371 students should be encouraged to conduct additional research. Each group should prepare  
372 a brief presentation and PowerPoint on the results of their SWOT analysis.
- 373 3. Students are asked to research the current event marketing techniques utilized by the  
374 LLSWS and the city of Greenville. Create a list of 5-10 techniques, identifying strengths  
375 and possible challenges for the event. After, assign students as the host committee (city of  
376 Greenville). Students will work together to create a one-page infographic for the  
377 upcoming 2023 LLSWS.
- 378 4. Students are asked to research and build a list of current sponsors secured by both LLWS  
379 and LLSWS. Students will then be asked to research and create a list of 5-7 potential  
380 local and non-local sponsors for the upcoming 2023 LLSWS. Students are then asked to  
381 create a one-page sponsorship proposal letter as LLSWS. Instructors are encouraged to  
382 utilize book chapter(s) on sponsorship as supportive readings for students.
- 383 5. Since 2017, Major League Baseball (MLB) and Little League have engaged in a unique  
384 partnership to develop youth baseball while also enhancing the event experience with the  
385 creation of the MLB Little League Classic ([External Link<sup>2</sup>](#)). Students are asked to  
386 identify ways in which the LLSWS can co-create an event experience, similarly to MLB  
387 and Little League. Students are then asked to develop an event experience that will  
388 develop youth softball, appeal to the wide range of consumers, and create meaning for the  
389 event. Students should develop a concept, theme, and unique element for the event.  
390 Students can present their proposed event experience using a PowerPoint presentation.

### 391 **Women in Sport/Diversity in Sport/Sport Development**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.littleleague.org/news/washington-nationals-and-philadelphia-phillies-to-play-in-the-2023-mlb-little-league-classic-in-williamspport/>

392           The case study highlights challenges for girls’ sport even after the passage of Title IX more  
393 than 50 years ago. From a sport development standpoint, the key issue in the case is how the  
394 LLSWS can be leveraged to increase sport participation in softball, increase fanship surrounding  
395 the event, and ultimately to advance women in sport. While youth participation in sport provides  
396 numerous benefits, how females view sport early in life has a lasting impact on sport  
397 participation (Dixon et al., 2008). With taglines for the event, “Girls with Game” and an all-  
398 female grounds crew Little League International has just started to scratch the surface on new  
399 and effective marketing strategies. The event itself has gained traction in viewership over the  
400 years with 193,000 viewers in 2016 and 526,00 viewers in 2022, a 177% increase (McLeod,  
401 2022). As a part of the lasting impact, Little League must continue to promote and create new  
402 and effective strategies to leverage sport participation and increase fanship to advance women in  
403 sport.

404           For instructors who would like to place an emphasis on youth girls sport participation,  
405 Green and Costa (2007) have suggested that participation and spectation are weakly related  
406 because the motives for participating and the motives for spectating are separate and different.  
407 Instructors may find this reading useful in providing additional information to think about  
408 strategies to increase participation and increase the fan base for the LLSWS. It is vital from a  
409 softball development viewpoint that both participation and spectatorship are necessary to grow  
410 the game and the LLSWS. Zarrett et al. (2020) computed a national survey, measuring vast  
411 participation inequities between the girls' game and boys' game, with girls “more likely to have  
412 never played (43.1% girls vs. 34.5% boys) and less likely to be currently playing sports (36.4%  
413 girls vs. 45.6% boys) compared to boys, and sport drop-out rates within the sample were  
414 significantly higher among girls than boys” (p. 4). Instructors also may use Powers’ et al. (2020)

415 report to further engage students in discussions that include barriers and challenges faced by  
416 young girls of color, their participation, and retention in sport. For instructors that wish to focus  
417 on the economics, Berri's(2022) chapter entitled, *Making sports economics inclusive: why you*  
418 *aren't teaching sports economics well if women are not part of your story*, would be an excellent  
419 prerequisite reading to consider assigning students. Instructors may find this case and additional  
420 materials can support and assist students in creating new and effective ways to promote youth  
421 girls' sporting events to support the advancement of women in sport.

422         The following questions could be used as a discussion guide on lessons related to girls'  
423 youth sport, women in sport, diversity, and sport development:

- 424         1. From a sport development standpoint, what opportunities could be created to  
425             encourage young girls to participate in softball? Next, identify and describe three  
426             recommendations the Greenville community can explore to advance participation in  
427             girls' softball for minority groups. (Tip: Students should find and consider the  
428             demographics of Greenville.)
- 429         2. What strategies and tactics have local sport teams (in your given geographical area)  
430             used to promote women's sport?
- 431         3. What type of impact do you believe having an all-female grounds crew has on the  
432             development of women's sport? What is a similar strategy LLSWS can create for the  
433             event in 2023?

434 **Suggested Assignments:**

- 435         1. Students are asked to list the stakeholders involved with the LLSWS (e.g., volunteers,  
436             sponsors, employees, youth athletes, translators, etc.). Students should then develop 3-5  
437             new strategies that would help to promote the advancement of women in sport through  
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- 439 the LLSWS for each set of stakeholders. Instructors can place students in small groups, or  
440 the instructor can assign each group as a set of stakeholders.
- 441 2. In 2022, four international teams joined the LLSWS (i.e., Canada, Italy, Philippines, and  
442 Puerto Rico). For the Asia-Pacific Region (Philippines), unfortunately for the youth  
443 athletes, the players were going to travel without their families and biggest supporters.  
444 Good news for the team, the local Greenville and neighboring Filipino communities lent  
445 their support for the girls in their quest of the Championship through donations and loud  
446 cheers. ([Read more here.](#)<sup>3</sup>) Students are asked to research and present strategies the  
447 LLSWS, and Greenville community can utilize to further promote international  
448 partnerships, growth of youth softball, and increase the inclusivity of sport for all girls.  
449 Instructors can place students in small groups, or the instructor can assign each group as a  
450 different international region.
- 451 3. Graduate students are to research both LLSWS and LLWS websites and marketing  
452 tactics. Students will begin to create a review of strategies used to promote each event  
453 side by side. In addition to the current strategies, students should review Zarrett et al.,  
454 (2020) and Powers et al., (2020) to create a visual chart of participation inequities  
455 between girls and boys in sport, current participation rates, and dropout rates. An  
456 additional chart should be created to visualize participation rates as it pertains to race and  
457 ethnicity in youth girls' sports. After which, students are asked to identify 4-6 strategies  
458 to increase the promotion of girls' sport and participation for minority groups in girls'

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.reflector.com/crowd-pleasing-home-or-away-teams-fueled-by-elm-street-fans/article\\_5c1049c4-380c-53fb-b944-973c412005b5.html](https://www.reflector.com/crowd-pleasing-home-or-away-teams-fueled-by-elm-street-fans/article_5c1049c4-380c-53fb-b944-973c412005b5.html)

459 youth sport. Instructors can place students in small groups to present their data and  
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