ATHLETX CONNECT

The Landscape of Youth Sports:

Insights, Economics, & Market Trends

Youth Sports Market

$40B–$70B

Total Economic Impact Engine

The core market is valued at $40 billion, expanding to a potential $70 billion when factoring in the massive economic impact of travel tournaments on local municipalities and business ecosystems.

Parent Spending

$30 Billion

Direct expenditures by families form the primary bedrock of the youth athletic market, supporting league fees, private coaching, team training, and equipment.

School Budgets

$10 Billion

Institutional school spending funds core technology, equipment, tournaments, and essential travel logistics.

Investment

Private Equity

KKR: Acquired Varsity Brands for $4.75 billion in 2024.

BPEA EQT: Purchased IMG Academy for $1.25 billion in 2023.

Ascent Sports Group (GTCR): Acquired LiveBarn for a reported $400 million.

Drivers of the Youth Sports Ecosystem

Parental psychology, intense specialization pressures, and recurring myths

Myths & Cycles

The industry relies heavily on recycling long-standing narrative loops. A prime example is the decades-old, oft-cited claim that **"70% of kids quit by age 13"** which completely lacks solid research backing. In reality, **52% of kids** continue to play sports through high school.

New companies and public voices emerge every **7-10 years**, recycling the same core research alongside repeating investment and family involvement cycles. But nothing seems to change.

Positive Coaching Alliance first highlighted these issues in 1998; Project Play since 2013

Parent Psychology

Involvement is heavily driven by complex parental psychology, including **Achievement-by-proxy syndrome (ABPS)**, **"Basking in Reflective Glory" (BIRGing)**, and a core need for personal validation and social identity.

Many adopt a strict **transactional or ROI mindset**, treating youth sports as a calculated financial investment. This directly leads to a misalignment of goals with their kids, toxic sideline behavior, extreme over-scheduling, and early pressure.

Specialization

Malcolm Gladwell's 10k hours, rising costs of college tuition, and Tiger Woods turbocharged specialization. Pressures are massively amplified by club team economics, high-profile NIL deals, and the competitiveness of college admissions. Families fast-track kids despite clear warnings.

Expert Guidance: National bodies like Project Play explicitly recommend that families **avoid specialization before puberty** to prevent overuse injuries and mental burnout.

Academic Merit vs. Athletic Aid

Academic Merit Aid

$50B
Annual Distribution

15%
Student Availability

Average Award: ~$15,000 / year

- Sourced from thousands of diverse institutions.
- Guaranteed for 4 years if GPA requirements are met.

Athletic Scholarships

$3.1B - $4B
Annual Distribution

< 2%
Athlete Availability

Average Award: ~$18,000 / year

- Awarded season-to-season at coach's discretion.
- D3 and Ivy League schools offer zero athletic aid.

Key Takeaway: Leverage Academic Funding

Academic merit aid offers significantly more reliable and abundant funding than athletic pathways. Athletes are strongly encouraged to "stack" their packages by applying for academic merit aid to successfully offset and secure their college funding.

Industry Segment Analysis

Youth Sports Ecosystem

01 / ACADEMIES, SCOUTING, AND CAMPS

IMG Academy • Montverde • Perfect Game

Providing specialized, high-performance training and structured developmental pathways for youth athletes.

02 / TECHNOLOGY

TeamSnap • Stats Perform • Pixellot • GameChanger • Shot Tracker • Hudl • Catapult • Driveline

Powering the digital backend of leagues with robust team management, analytics, and intelligent camera tracking.

03 / MEDIA & MARKETING

Overtime • Live Barn • Learfield • JMI Sports • Youth, Inc.

Broadening visibility through game film sharing, youth sports broadcasts, next-generation media channels, and analytics.

04 / RECRUITING, GAMES, LEARNING

Volo Sports • NCSA • Positive Coaching Alliance • Project Play

Connecting amateur players with professional coaching, training, research, local social leagues, and structured collegiate scouting networks.

Together, these entities provide the essential infrastructure, data analytics, media coverage, and developmental pathways that sustain the multibillion-dollar youth sports landscape.

Platform Engagement & Revenue

Leading technology solutions drive scale through subscriptions and analytics

9M

GameChanger

Owned by Dick's Sporting Goods. Boasts 9 million active users, covers 9 million games annually, and generated $100 million in FY24 revenue through a subscription model.

30M

TeamSnap

Reaches 30 million players, coaches, and parents across 19,000 sports organizations, managing team logistics with an estimated annual revenue between $100M and $250M.

$100M

Catapult

Provides wearables & video analysis, generating $100M in FY24 via a SaaS model with an 8.1-year customer lifetime duration and a market cap of $1.2B.

STATS PERFORM: THE DATA ENGINE

- Claims **7.2 petabytes** of sports data and over **14 billion** unique data points.
- Projects **$500 million** in FY25 revenue driven by sports betting and media integrations.
- Set to record its **first profitable year** in company history in 2025.

AGGRESSIVE FINANCIAL SCALING

Acquisitions & Mixed Revenue Growth

- **SportsEngine Acquisition:** In May 2026, SportsEngine was acquired by PlayMetrics; while seeking a $400M-$500M valuation, it landed around $150M, representing 1x-2x revenues.
- **IMG Academy's $1.25B Sale:** Sold to Hong Kong-based PE firm BPEA EQT in 2023, driven by estimated annual revenues of $280M-$300M from tuition costs of $85k-$95k per student athlete.
- **Perfect Game's 400% Growth:** Generated $100M in FY24 revenue and estimates $169M for FY25. Perfect Game reaches 2 million youth athletes and hosts thousands of events, generating significantly more than Little League, which produces $42M in annual revenue.
- **Diverse Revenue Streams:** Perfect Game's models include tournament fees, subscriptions to player ranking databases, media, sponsorships, and merchandise.

RESOURCES

VOICES

- **Tom Farrey** | Executive Director Sports & Society Program, The Aspen Institute
- **Jay Bilas** | ESPN Basketball Analyst, Former NBA Player, Lawyer
- **Greg Olson** | Founder Youth, Inc., NFL Broadcaster, Former NFL Player
- **Jonathan Carone** | Creator of Healthy Sports Parents
- **Buying Sandlot** | The Business of Youth Sports
- **Karissa Niehoff** | Retired Chief Executive Officer at NFHS