

If the Kids Can't Play, Nothing Else Matters

By the CEO of DICK'S Sporting Goods

Climate change is not only a threat to our future, it is a direct threat to our children's ability to play sports. When afternoon practices are shut down due to heat waves, heavy rain floods on the soccer fields, or wildfire smoke, kids lose more than an afternoon workout. They lose a space where they learn how to be teammates, how to manage stress, and how to feel proud of themselves.

As a child, I remember the comfort of lacing up my sneakers and heading to practice, no matter what other distractions were going on around me. The field was where I could tune everything out and just play. Today, kids do not have that same certainty. Seasons are getting shorter, air quality warnings are becoming more common, and weather-related cancellations are starting to feel like a normal part of youth sports. Now, I lead a company that supports millions of young athletes every day. That is a privilege, and it is also a responsibility that I do not take lightly. It is easy to think sports are separate from what is happening to the planet. The opposite is true. Climate heavily shapes sports. How we package gear and move it either protects or harms the places where kids play.

For years, DICK'S Sporting Goods has invested in environmental, social, and governance initiatives, but climate change has forced us to move faster and think more about our impact. One example is single-use plastic. For decades, plastic bags at checkout were treated as a small convenience. In reality, they create waste that ends up in landfills, oceans, and on the fields and parks where children practice. That is why our company is committed to removing single-use plastic bags in stores and testing better options that can be reused or recycled. We are also pushing suppliers and partners to reduce unnecessary packaging and to explore materials that have a smaller carbon footprint. A company of our scale makes small decisions every day that add up and shape how we operate. These choices about convenience have to change.

Of course, plastic bags are only one part of the problem. Retailers like ours have to look at the bigger picture. How we light our stores, how efficiently we run our distribution centers, and how we ship products. When energy waste is cut and there are investments in cleaner options, we protect the spaces

where children play. We make sure the next generation can run, jump, and play outside safely for many years to come.

Some claim sports retailers cannot solve climate change and they are right. However, we can be part of the problem or part of the solution. We helped build a culture where gear arrives at the tap of a screen, wrapped in plastic and cardboard. We can build a culture where performance and responsibility go hand in hand. Parents should not have to choose between supporting their kids' sports and supporting the planet.

I do not expect perfection from our industry or my company. I expect progress, honesty, and the willingness to make choices that help our planet. Children looking forward to their next practice are not thinking about ESG goals or emissions charts. They want a safe field, a clear sky, and the opportunity to play. Our job as business leaders is to honor and protect that wish.

The CEO of DICK'S Sporting Goods leads the company's efforts to protect the environment and support youth sports.

Strategy Note: This thought-leadership piece positions DICK'S Sporting Goods as a company that takes climate change seriously by using youth sports as the center of its mission. By highlighting youth sports, the CEO is able to leverage the innocence of children's experiences to express a message through emotional branding. The message aligns with the brand by demonstrating performance and environmental responsibility can coexist. It communicates to parents, athletes, and industry peers that the company is serious about its sustainability efforts and the communities it serves, without using heavy promotional language. The piece also positions the brand as a leader in ESG commitments.

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