



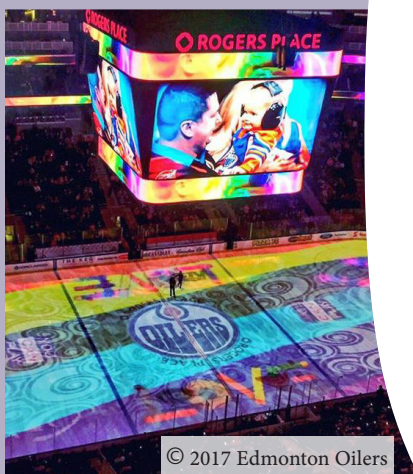
- Athletes work with community to provide a safe environment.
- Home to a community of allies to give a true sense of belonging.
- Strives to develop an all-inclusive culture of respect within sports.



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Above: Kurtis Gabriel after scoring the game-winning goal while sporting Pride Tape—the first occurrence of this on national TV.

Below: The Edmonton Oilers’ ice prior to the start of their You Can Play/Pride night.



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“If You Can Play, You Can Play”

FOUNDER’S MESSAGE TO PROMOTE EQUALITY WITHIN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

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All You Need to Know About You Can Play

Though major league sports have numerous partnerships and themed game nights, there is only one that works to end homophobia within the world of sports. The You Can Play Project, also known simply as You Can Play, is an activist organization based in Denver, Colorado and partnered with teams all over the United States and Canada.

Perhaps one of the most notable partnerships You Can Play has is with the National Hockey League (NHL), with all of the NHL teams—and even some minor league teams!—having a You Can Play/Pride Game Night. Teams come out in pregame warm ups decked out in themed uniforms and rainbow-colored stick tape, appropriately called Pride Tape.

Since the program’s inception in February of 2017, one member from each NHL team and participating American League (AHL) teams would serve as a You Can Play ambassador. This ambassador works alongside You Can Play to shine light on community-related programs that aid in the fight against homophobia.

Showcasing that the NHL and its athletes, teams, and fans support the LGBT+ community is a huge step in the right direction. According to the You Can Play mission statement, almost 85% of fans feel as though an openly gay person would not be safe spectating a sporting event. You Can Play works to lower this number until it is zero, and an openly gay individual would feel just as safe at any sporting event as a straight person would.

No one should be afraid to be themselves at a sporting event, and You Can Play works alongside teams, leagues, and communities to make sure everyone is welcome.



Above Left: The NHL has since created a logo and overall theme for their work with You Can Play. This is called “Hockey is for Everyone,” and they often use the hashtag of the same phrase on social media to spread their message.

Above Right: Pride Tape works alongside You Can Play and professional sports such as hockey and baseball to create tape that can be used as grip tape for hockey sticks and baseball bats.

Spotlight on Pride Tape

You Can Play works alongside a Canadian-based hockey stick tape brand, Pride Tape, to eliminate homophobia in the hockey world—as well as in sports overall. Pride Tape is present on nearly all of the sticks during pregame warm-ups, but players usually switch back to their usual white or black.

One instance, however, helped highlight the NHL's alliance with the LGBT+ community.

In 2019, Kurtis Gabriel, who played at the time with the New Jersey Devils, decided to keep his Pride Tape on his stick for the duration of the game. He ended up scoring the game-winning goal, and it provided immeasurable amounts of support for the LGBT+ community nationwide in both Canada and the United States.

Nothing like that had been seen before, and pregame warm-ups aren't usually broadcast on national TV, so for Gabriel to keep the Pride Tape on his stick and score the goal that won his team the game, spread the message about You Can Play farther than ever before.

Gabriel has since started to use Pride Tape on his hockey sticks for each game, even after signing with a new franchise and team. In an interview with the NHL, Gabriel said he's keeping the rainbow-patterned tape on his stick acts as a "continuous message of support for the LGBT+ community," and that he will use Pride Tape until he retires from the sport.



Image: Kurtis Gabriel using Pride Tape during the 2019-2020 hockey season.

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SPORT	GAME NIGHT	AUCTIONS	EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE	✓	✓	✓
AMERICAN HCOEKY LEAGUE	✓	✓	✓
NATIONAL WOMENS HOCKEY LEAGUE	✓	✓	✓
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL	✓	✓	✓
MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL	✓	✓	
NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION	✓		✓
NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE			✓
NASCAR		✓	✓
US SOCCER		✓	✓
TEAM CANADA		✓	✓



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