

Utah Area Sports

PURPOSE OF SPORTS

Physical activities in the Church are designed to help members focus on and accomplish the mission of the Church, which is to ‘invite all to come unto Christ’ (D&C 20:59) and “be perfected in Him” (Moroni 10:32). Such activities offer many opportunities for fellowship, activating, and sharing the gospel with others. When participants demonstrate Christlike behavior and attitudes, physical activities can help them grow spiritually.

The gospel focuses on Church members spiritual development, as well as their social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. Wholesome competitive sports and recreation and fitness activities can help members grow in all these areas.

Many communities sponsor competitive sports programs for children, youth, and adults. Often these programs tolerate and even promote attitudes and behaviors not in harmony with Church teachings and standards. Church sports programs offer opportunities for member to participate in activities where adherence to Church standards and gospel teachings is expected and required.

Members should not feel compelled to join in every activity offered. They should select activities they desire to participate in that allow them to meet family responsibilities, economic responsibilities, church callings, and other commitments.

Disabled individuals should be included when they can and want to participate. Almost all activities can be adjusted to include rather than exclude.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen and contribute to the unity of families through their participation in sports.
2. Help priesthood quorums and auxiliaries accomplish the mission of the Church.
3. Use sports and other physical activities to help members live and share the gospel through participation, socializing, and fellowship.
4. Expect and encourage all participants to adhere to and demonstrate gospel principles and teaching, including a continuing emphasis on good sportsmanship.
5. Provide a variety of competitive sports that meet members’ interests and needs.
6. Help participants acquire and develop skills that will encourage lifelong interest and participation.
7. Promote positive and nurturing interpersonal relationships.
8. Call, train, and certify qualified officials.
9. Plan and schedule appropriate league and tournament play.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is absolutely essential in sports competition. Good sportsmanship includes thoughtfulness and concern for others; sincere admiration of the skills of teammates, opponents, and officials, self-control; humility in victory; and calmness and composure in defeat. It is playing fair, following both the spirit and the letter of the rules. It is Christlike behavior on the court or field, on the bench, or in the stands. Promoting and displaying good sportsmanship in competitive activities is a responsibility of everyone involved.

In speaking to participants in Church sports, President Ezra Taft Benson advised, “Sportsmanship is the spirituality in athletics, and we believe that the Church athletic program is a spiritual program. If it wasn’t, we wouldn’t continue it, because our purpose is to build men and women of character and spirituality.” (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p 437).

SPIRITUALITY

Priesthood and auxiliary leaders, sports directors, coaches, players, and spectators should understand how quality sports programs can contribute to developing Christlike attributes and plan ways to do this. The first Presidency has explained the “Church sports activities have a unique central purpose..a purpose much higher than the development of physical prowess, or even victory itself. It is to strengthen faith, build integrity, and develop in each participant the attributes of His Maker” (The Church Sports Official [53019]).

ROLE OF THE AREA SPORTS COMMITTEE

The Area Presidency has authorized an area-wide sports program and has called an area sports director to coordinate and supervise sports within the area. Post-stake competition is currently limited to Coordinating Council play.

The Area Sports Committee trains so that the sports program follows Church policies and guidelines, focuses on Christlike conduct and good sportsmanship, and helps participants build testimonies and spirituality.

The Area Sports Director chairs the area sports committee. With approval of the Area Presidency and in cooperation with local priesthood leaders, the area sports committee trains, coordinates, and directs sports programs in the area. The committee is composed of all Area Assistants and Area Sports Specialists, Area Officials Coordinator and Assistants, Division Sports Specialists and Assistants and other members as needed.