

Utah Area Sports

Sports News—February 2010

A Remarkable Saturday Morning

The young men of the Draper Utah Eastridge 4th Ward recently had a great Saturday morning. For the Priests it started with a 9:00 a.m. appointment at the Draper Temple to work in the Bapistry, where a spirit of reverence and sacrifice prevailed. Voices were hushed as each young man played his part in the sacred ordinances performed there.

Then, returning home, they quickly changed into their basketball clothes so they could participate in a stake organized basketball game. There was a lot more noise at that event, with cheers and applause for points scored and well executed plays. There were also feelings of frustration when the team fell behind, yet every young man was able to control his temper and have fun with his teammates as they worked together to figure out the game. At one point a young man requested to sit on the side for a few minutes so he could cool down—both figuratively and literally. He went back in on a substitution and displayed good sportsmanship the rest of the game. In fact, in spite of the heated competition there was even some kidding with members of the other team and the refs. As the clock struck noon these young men—most of whom would have slept in on a typical Saturday—had spent the morning together as friends (including a friend of another faith). There was a lot of cheerful chatter as they made their way to their cars.

As for the Deacons and Teachers, their morning was just the reverse. They started with basketball, went home and changed, and then made their way to the temple. Not another league in the world can make a morning like that – not intramural, school, nor city sponsored leagues can give a young man both the blessings of the temple and the friendship of Church Sports. It really is unique.

A Night at the ... Sports Mall

It won't be dinosaurs and dead presidents who are awake in the late hours of February 5, 2010—it will be the Young Adults of the Utah Salt Lake City Area as they make their way to the Sports Mall at 5445 South, 9th East at 10:45 p.m. thru 1:00 a.m. With swimming, basketball and Wally ball; tennis; dodge ball; line dancing; and squash it will be an outstanding chance to get together. No need to pre-register. For details see the attached *Sports Calendar* and flyer.

40 Sports and 6 Activities – Something for Everyone

Following is a list of the currently approved sports and activities that have been enjoyed by stakes and wards in the Utah Area. If you're looking for a way to involve more people, consider implementing some of the non-traditional sports into your program. Even those who do not consider themselves athletic can enjoy an organized hike, a good game of chess or checkers, or a couple of hours at the bowling alley. Some of these sports are ideal for seniors, others for the Young Men, Young Women, and Young Adults. They can be played co-ed, family style, and tournament. There's a lot of fun and fellowship to be had with neighbors and friends if you create opportunities to get together thru Church Sports.

1 – Basketball	2 – Volleyball
3 – Softball	4 – Futsal (indoor soccer)
5 – Flag Football	6 – 5K Run/Walk
7 – Ultimate Disk (Frisbee)	8 – Golf
9 – Tennis	10 – Ping Pong/TableTennis
11 – Kickball	12 – Chess
13 – Badminton	14 – Dodge ball
15 – Bowling	16 – Checkers
17 – Outdoor Volleyball	18 – Racquetball
19 – 3 on 3 Basketball	20 – Curling
21 – Horseshoes	22 – Swimming
23 – Soccer (Mini-Soccer)	24 – Biking
25 – Aerobics	26 – Track
27 – Lacrosse	28 – Hockey
29 – Speed Skating	30 – 5 on 5 on 5 Softball
31 – Skeet Shooting	32 – Skiing
33 – Snowboarding	34 – Hiking
35 – Figure Skating	36 – Frisbee golf
37 – Balloon volleyball	38 – Deck Tennis
39 – Pickleball	40 – Speedminton
Activities	
Family Olympics	Wii Tournament
Speed Dating (YSA, YW, YM)	Health Fair
Weekly Sports Night	Family Fun Sports Fair

Utah Area North – an interview with Leonard Mecham, Utah Area North Sports Director

Tell us about the Utah Area North. Our area goes as far north as Malad, Idaho; east to Rock Springs, Wyoming; and south to include Park City and the Heber Valley. We have 15 Coordinating Councils that include 150 Stakes.

What's the most significant change you've seen in Church Sports since your calling as Area Director?

I've been in this position for ten years and the most important thing to happen is that we've converted

Church Sports from simply an ad hoc sports program where you grab a referee here and a coach there to play a few games into a truly effective fellowshiping program. The way we brought that about was through an ongoing series of firesides where we stressed that the purpose of the program is to invite people into the church and to change lives. The program succeeded because our Priesthood Leaders called great people to work on our Area, Stake, and Ward committees to implement the program after the firesides were completed.

What are the most popular programs in your area?

Basketball, Volleyball and Flag Football are most popular. Dodge ball and Futsal (indoor soccer) have also attracted a lot of interest.

We've also had great success with special programs. The Park City Stake, for example, has sponsored a 5K "Turkey Trot" (five kilometer run/walk) the past two years with outstanding results. They had more than 400 participants last year—with 60% to 70% being friends of other faiths. Talk about a great way for members of the church to interact with their neighbors. The entry fee is 2 cans of food to be donated to the homeless food pantry, which led to the single largest donation in their history.

Of course we plan and sponsor many events, but these are the ones that currently involve the most people.

How have you addressed the problems associated with poor sportsmanship? Sportsmanship problems have really started to drop off. The way we've accomplished that is by implementing a Sportsmanship Program where teams get points for good behavior and demerits for poor sportsmanship. For example, a basketball team gets points deducted for technical fouls. The Sportsmanship score is kept alongside the game score, and it's possible for a team to win a game and still not advance in a tournament because of their sportsmanship score. It doesn't take very long for a team to start disciplining itself to get a better sportsmanship score.

This is very intriguing. How does a team get sportsmanship points? Sportsmanship points come from conduct on the floor, such as applauding the other team when they make a good play; how the members of the team conduct themselves relative to the referees, their teammates, and opponents; the demeanor of the coaches, etc. Of course bad behavior results in points deducted.

We had a Men's team two years ago that was by far the best team in the regional basketball tournament. But they had some hotheads who exhibited poor sportsmanship. In their last game they got a technical foul. At the end the game the officials and tournament

managers got together and added up the game score and the sportsmanship score and announced that the losing team actually had the highest combined score, which meant that they got to advance in tournament play. Of course that was disappointing to the team who got eliminated, but our Priesthood Leaders backed us up.

The next year that team assigned two players to promote good sportsmanship and they actually became a model team. The players who caused problems the first year controlled themselves and everyone had a great time. The point was made and sportsmanship improved. It's important to note that at this particular regional tournament more than 60 members of other faiths were involved, so the impact on the reputation of the church is profound. We were proud to have these visitors join us once we got sportsmanship under control.

How do you train officials? We train, train, and train. We hold clinics several months ahead of a season.

Participants meet for 2 to 3 hours on Thursday night to go through the rule book and then again on Saturday where they actually go out on the court with teams so the new officials learn how to manage a game. With regards to managing the crowd, we've taken that off the shoulders of our referees—it's up to the Priesthood Leaders and coaches to talk to the spectators who may be getting a little too vocal or angry. That's all part of our sportsmanship program.

How do you get good coaches? That comes out of the firesides where we stress to Bishops that coaches should be an active brother or sister with a firm testimony of the gospel. Assistant coaches can be less active members or a friend of another faith. But so many questions about the gospel and the challenges of life come up in the course of practices and play (particularly with the youth) that we want to have someone who can answer from a strong gospel perspective. Our Priesthood Leaders have grasped this and given us some really great women and men to coach our teams. Of course it's an ongoing challenge to keep the program staffed, but it is well worth the effort.

Concluding thoughts? Now that the program has become a priority program in the church we need to get behind it and give it our best effort. This is a non-threatening program and we can put our arms around people to let them know that we care about them and that we have something special in the gospel. Once we have that relationship we can help bring them to Christ.

To subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter, please send an e-mail to Utah.Area.Sports@gmail.com. Comments or ideas for the newsletter to jerryBorrowman@gmail.com.
