

# Utah Area Sports

## Sports News—May 2010

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### Church Sports Leads to the Temple

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A number of years ago an older couple in our area (the husband was age 68, his wife age 65) had been members of the Church all their lives but had never felt the desire to attend. Recognizing that they both enjoyed sports, their church leaders asked if they would be scorekeepers in Church Sports events, a calling which they accepted and enjoyed. Last year they were sealed in the temple after all their years together. Church Sports can reach so many people and be a blessing in their lives. *Reported by Leonard Mecham, Utah Area North Sports Director*

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### Report on YSA Basketball Tournament

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The first ever Utah Salt Lake City Area All- Area Young Single Adult Basketball Tournament concluded on Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup> with nineteen Men's teams and four Women's teams competing. The Valley Park 9<sup>th</sup> Ward Young Men's team won top prize in an exciting game with the University 33<sup>rd</sup> Ward, and the Winder 19<sup>th</sup> Ward Women's Team took the honors in the Women's Championship Bracket. Our sincere thanks to all the teams who participated for their good sportsmanship and gracious behavior. We also want to thank the Liberty Stake, Wells Stake, Park Stake and the Riverton Stake for allowing us to use their respective gymnasiums, and for all the officials, scorekeepers and participants in this successful culmination to the Young Adult basketball season. Young Adult Sports is alive and well in the Salt Lake Valley! *Gary and Suzanne Larsen, YSA Specialists.*

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### Ideas for developing good sportsmanship

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*Hi Bob-*

*Your e-mail note concerning sportsmanship has been referred to me and I hope I can provide some sense of the way we approach this subject. It is a critical issue as we try to increase (or in some cases restart) sports programs in the Church. It is a bit difficult to identify any one "program" that is used in the several areas we all work with but here is a start on the subject...*

This is the introduction to an e-mail from **Gary Hooper**, Utah South Area Sports Director to a *Sports News* reader who wrote in with a question about how to develop the habits of good sportsmanship in his stake. Here are some

of the ideas that Gary suggested in his reply that may work in your ward and stake.

- First, and foremost, it's important that everyone involved in Church Sports clearly understands that the purpose of the program is to build a sense of community within the ward and stake while developing personal character in each participant.
- It is impossible to achieve this objective without good sportsmanship. That's why, "we insist on an emphasis on sportsmanship from the moment we extend a call to the people who serve, as well as when we train coaches, officials, and those who organize the teams."
- This expectation applies to spectators, which is made clear at the beginning of each game.

There are a number of concrete ways to reinforce the message of good sportsmanship throughout the various seasons:

- Throughout the state of Utah we have made a series of large posters that spell out the intent and mission of each group—Young Women, Aaronic Priesthood, Relief Society and Melchizedek Priesthood—identifying the goals of the group so that the spiritual values they are striving for are directly related to their activities in Church Sports
- This message is reinforced by reciting the text on the posters at each and every game, right after the opening prayer. It is read publicly so that everyone in attendance hears it, including the coaches, officials, players, and spectators. Attaching spiritual significance to the game or event quite naturally decreases incidents of poor sportsmanship. We find that taking time to read these posters works much better than a quick prayer followed by the start of play.
- A basic theme in the program asserts that careful attention to organization and management of the event is essential to its success. One example is that players and officials are expected to be ready and on time when the game is scheduled to start so that everyone involved feels there is order and structure to the event. People are more likely to exhibit poor sportsmanship when the games are haphazard and sloppy. A well disciplined program leads to good discipline at the game.
- There should be a single person identified at each event who is in charge of the conduct of the games and facilities, including spectators. That person might be a member of the Stake Presidency, a High Councilor or even the Sports Specialist, dressed in Sunday attire. As the one in charge they are visible and ready to work quietly

with those in attendance who might be unruly or otherwise out of order. Someone displaying poor sportsmanship should be counseled immediately and reminded of the aims of church sports. The presiding officials should not be tied up keeping score or officiating so they can monitor the crowd and the situation.

- Players and coaches, in turn, are governed in their behavior by the officials of the game.
  - The officials have plenty to do keeping track of the play and the conduct of the participants without having to worry about the crowd, which is why we separate these responsibilities.
- Officials should be formally called to serve—not just an “anybody want to ref?” at the beginning of the game. Properly called and trained officials are essential to good sportsmanship, and we strive to have at least two officials called from each Ward.
- Officials are trained and certified by Officials Coordinators in the various Coordinating Councils. These are folks with high school and college training and experience. Each prospective official attends an organized series of lessons in the classroom followed by observing other officials in action as well as by taking the court while shadowed by a Training Official for a required number of games. When this program is completed the new official receives a certificate as a Church Certified Official and a lanyard with that title lettered on it plus a whistle to complete his or her recognition.
- We also encourage our stakes and wards to use High School officials who are already skilled referees, asking these individuals to complete a brief training program in any additional rules or points of emphasis that apply to Church Sports before we certify them for Church officiating.
- Using this format we have trained a large number of officials and keep track of them so that each game is well managed and fairly refereed.
- Finally, those who are called to serve at the Area and Council levels try to visit the tournaments to monitor sportsmanship and to thank those who work so hard in pushing this aspect of the program

*“I can say personally that with this emphasis on good sportsmanship we have changed the nature of our games and tournaments for the better. We see very few incidents today that were so commonplace just a few*

*years ago and I believe this strong emphasis on good sportsmanship is making a difference for all involved. I hope this long explanation somehow conveys the need for all of us to be involved in striving for good sportsmanship. Sincerely, Gary Hooper, Utah Area South Sports Director*

A number of conclusions come out of this exchange:

1. Good sportsmanship doesn’t just happen—it is the result of specific objectives and consistent effort.
2. Priesthood leader involvement is the primary key to success—by having a priesthood leader who is ultimately responsible for each game the fans are better behaved, the officials can concentrate on the game, and spiritual objectives are emphasized.
3. Training of officials and coaches assures consistency of play and fewer disputes.
4. Players enjoy the game more when rules are applied evenly and the official is comfortable in his or her role.
5. Asking questions of the editor of *Sports News* is a great way to prompt interesting and relevant articles like this one, so send your comments and questions to [jerryborrowman@gmail.com](mailto:jerryborrowman@gmail.com)

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### **The Big Three or the Easygoing Four?**

Basketball, Volleyball, and Softball are considered the “Big 3” of Church Sports—involving the most members and friends. A lot of fellowshiping takes place in these competitive events.

But as the grass turns green and the sun starts to shine you might consider a more relaxed way to interact with fellow members and friends—golf. That’s right, a great many units in the state encourage both formal and informal golf outings, whether a ward Elder’s Quorum tournament, a stake scramble, or an Area event, golf is a great way to socialize with individuals in a more relaxed setting where conversation flows easily and the topic can easily turn to the values and beliefs that you cherish. Of course it’s mostly for fun, so church probably isn’t the focus. Gospel topics that come up do so in a very natural and relaxed way. Paradoxically, this is why an outing like this is such a great missionary and reactivation tool.

If you like golf and you have friends, why not bring the two together in a friendly round at the end of a busy day? And while you’re at it, check the *Sports Calendar* for your Area and Council to see if they have a tournament planned for you.

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