

Utah Area Sports

Sports News—June 2010

Scriptural Thought

“Wherefore, verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal.” (D&C 29:34)

Rules of Play to Be Chosen in Each Coordinating Council

As the Coordinating Councils assume full responsibility for Church Sports in their geographical locations they will select the rules of play for all sports and all teams. Some may choose high school rules, others may decide on various federation rules, etc. This decision will be under the direction of the Agent Stake President assigned to Sports along with those called to assist him. Each stake president in the Council has the chance to provide input to the decisions that apply to sports in their Coordinating Council.

The Hills Are Alive...

Doesn't this beautiful time of the year make you want to just burst into song along with Julie Andrews as Maria von Trapp as she ran joyfully through the edelweiss in the Austrian Alps exuberantly singing in celebration of the beauty of the earth? The Alps are spectacular—but they don't have anything over the Wasatch in spring and summer.

Which is why some wards and stakes organize hiking activities for adults (the youth get plenty of hiking at their summer camps). Consider encouraging Relief Society interest groups to sign up for organized hiking tours on well maintained trails as part of the summer recreation programs sponsored by local communities, or a hiking expedition for the Elders Quorum and High Priest Group for those who love photography. The spring flowers in the canyons will be in their full splendor as this newsletter goes to press. It's a great way to involve members who choose not to participate in other sports.

Many stakes have recreational properties where a great game of softball, outdoor volleyball, and even horseshoes can add to the fun of a ward picnic or campout.

The bottom line is that Church Sports isn't only about organized team play that requires a whole season—it can be simple summer activities that bring people together in the great outdoors. By the way, perhaps you've heard that silly old joke, “The Hills Are Alive...and it's pretty frightening!” It doesn't have to be when you go there with friends.

Fire Sale on Sports Equipment

Randy Kruger—801-328-8045 (h) or 801-777-1516(w)
Randy.kruger@hotmail.com (randy_kruger at Hotmail)

With the change to Coordinating Council governance of all sports activities, the Utah Area Sports office in Taylorsville is divesting itself of a variety of sports equipment and uniforms. This equipment is available to anyone interested and will be sold on a first-come basis by contacting Randy Kruger at the numbers listed above.

A very partial list includes: “73 Mikasa Indoor Volleyballs @ \$20.00 each; 11 Champro Volleyball nets @ \$16 each; 1 electronic scoreboard for \$450; 20 dozen Whistle lanyards @ \$1 each; 3 sets of Softball safety bases at \$45 each, 1 set of regular bases @ \$30; 45 dozen sets of legal softballs and more than 100 dozen “illegal” practice-only softballs, to name a few. Dozens of Church Sports Posters are available at no charge for the Melchizedek Priesthood, Relief Society, Young Women, and Aaronic Priesthood. Some of these are available with the “Utah Area Sports” logo on them, while others are plain.

There is also a variety of T-shirts for first and second place teams who win a Coordinating Council tournaments including basketball, soccer, Futsal, softball, golf, tennis, 5K run and volleyball shirts.

Going forward, equipment and uniforms will be purchased and maintained at the Coordinating Council level throughout the state.

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan—A Sportsmanship Contract

Thanks to the *Mormon Times Online Edition*, we occasionally hear from *Sports News* readers outside of Utah. An e-mail from Brother Jack Johansson shares a terrific idea on improving sportsmanship:

Dear Brother Borrowman—Prior to being called as a member of our ward bishopric, I served as Stake Sports Specialist for about 6 years in the Bloomfield Hills, Michigan Stake. In view of your request in the May newsletter asking for suggestions for sportsmanship, I thought I'd share a particularly effective tool we use before the start of a sports season—it is to have each participant review our standards and rules of play, and to then sign a "sportsmanship contract" that includes the participant's name, address, phone number, ward, team, and e-mail address (our main way of reaching out to participants). Each player has to read the rules and sportsmanship expectations, and then complete a brief quiz, followed by their signature to a statement that reads, "I agree to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship while participating as a player, coach, or spectator at the Bloomfield Hills Stake Athletic Events." This accomplishes two things—when the event actually occurs the rules are already written out so that participants and officials don't "make up the rules along the way"—they are all there in black and white to be enforced fairly, with appropriate mercy, but also a sense of justice. We also find that having all participants sign and return the contract is critical in that it prevents the "I didn't know I couldn't do that" excuse when contention arises.

Brother Johansson indicates that the sportsmanship contract must be returned by e-mail to a stake official prior

to the start of the season. Also attached to the contract is a letter from stake sports officials with scriptures that are cited to encourage fair play, including the one at the beginning of this newsletter. The packet highlights an outstanding article from Brother Val Hale, former BYU Athletic Director, which follows:

What does the Lord think of poor sportsmanship in athletics? Some might argue that sports are insignificant in the eternal scheme of things and that yelling at referees or at opposing players and throwing tantrums on the field are relatively harmless acts. But the scriptures are very clear in explaining that the Lord deplores contention of any kind. The Lord certainly must be concerned about our attitudes and the unkind words we hurl at officials and others.

Good sportsmanship can prevail if we each do our part to be good sports and to let others know that rude, un-Christlike behavior is unacceptable—especially in athletics. Following are some ideas that, when implemented, help make athletic events more enjoyable for everyone:

1. *Don't allow teammates to behave in an unsportsmanlike manner.* Peer pressure is a powerful influence and can be utilized to create a positive atmosphere at sporting events. Before each season, players should agree among themselves that they will not tolerate unsportsmanlike conduct on their team. If a player objects to a call or engages in an argument with an opponent, teammates need to express their concern to the player immediately, helping him to recognize that angry words are unacceptable.

2. *Help officials by making honor calls.* Honor calls are encouraged in Church sports and ought to be more prevalent at all levels of athletics. Officials cannot see all the action at once. Such honesty takes controversy out of calls, especially close plays, and makes officiating much easier.

3. *Praise officials when they make good calls—even if they go against your team—and accept the fact that officials aren't perfect.* Every official makes mistakes, and Church officials often receive only brief basic training. Generally, officials know when they have made a bad call, but there is little that can be done to change a call once it has been made.

4. *Compliment the opposition after a good play or game.* We often get so caught up in the heat of competition that we fail to acknowledge a good play by the opposition. Kind words like “Nice shot” or “Good block,” spoken to an opponent, will not hurt your team’s performance and will promote friendly competition.

5. *Don't make excuses for poor play or losses.* After a loss, players sometimes blame the defeat on anything but their own performance. Officials, scorekeepers, bad lighting, and poor equipment end up being scapegoats.

6. *Coaches must set an example of good sportsmanship.* Coaches are responsible for the actions of their teams. They set the tone for the game. Coaches of youth, in particular, have a vital responsibility to teach their players the importance of good sportsmanship. The memory of a coach

angrily confronting an umpire will remain with a young player much longer than the memory of the team losing the game.

7. *Make certain each contest begins with prayer.* A prayer before a game has a calming influence. It helps put the game in perspective and reminds players of the need for good sportsmanship.

8. *Use properly trained officials.* Church athletic officials should be called and set apart by their priesthood leaders. Adequate training must accompany the call. We need to remember that most Church officials are volunteers who are trying to do their best at a very difficult job.

9. *Don't tolerate bad sportsmanship by friends and family members.* Friends and family members can sometimes be the greatest influence for good sportsmanship. Spouses should set examples for each other of good sportsmanship at games, whether as spectators or participants. As parents, we can discourage our children from blaming others for losses or failures. We can encourage our children’s coaches not to harass officials and to be better examples for team members.

10. *Finally, cheer for your team, win or lose.* Coaches and players often spend hours practicing. They deserve our warm support. We all need to take a more active role in promoting good sportsmanship in athletics. Regardless of our role—fan, player, coach, or administrator—we can make a difference if we refuse to tolerate unsportsmanlike conduct. If we do our part, Church athletics will continue to be a valuable and important tool, providing opportunities for fellowship and wholesome recreation.

Val Hale, Former BYU Athletic Director

Our thanks to Brother Johansson for sharing these great ideas. We're glad to know Church Sports is alive both in and outside of our home turf of Utah!

Check us out on the Web!

1. As you can see, the *Deseret News Mormon Times* is a great place to get information about current events in the Church, including Church Sports. Go to www.mormontimes.com for a variety of great articles, including a complete archive of our previous newsletters.
2. You can also find our mission statement and other training materials at our official **Utah Area Sports website** at www.utahareasports.org
3. We've even joined Facebook. Do a search for Utah Area Sports in Facebook and join the group.
4. Forward this e-mail and newsletter to friends and associates who enjoy Church Sports in your Coordinating Council, Stake, and Ward and encourage them to sign up by sending an e-mail to Utah.Area.Sports@gmail.com

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.