

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
UTAH AREA SPORTS



Purpose of Church Sports

Church sports activities 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*) These activities offer many opportunities for fellowshiping, activating, and sharing the gospel with others. When participants demonstrate Christlike behavior and attitudes, physical activities can help them grow spiritually. (*Utah Area Sports Manual, introduction*)

Church activities should strengthen testimonies and foster personal growth. They also should provide opportunities to apply gospel principles and help participants develop friendships in a wholesome environment. (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Bk.2:Sec.10:p.271*)

Church sports programs offer opportunities for members to participate in activities where adherence to Church standards and gospel teachings is expected and required. (*Utah Area Sports Manual, introduction*)

The objectives of the sports program are to:

- ◆ Strengthen and contribute to the unity of families through their participation in sports.
- ◆ Help priesthood quorums and auxiliaries accomplish the mission of the Church.
- ◆ Use sports and other physical activities to help members live and share the gospel through participation, socializing, and fellowshiping.
- ◆ Encourage all participants to adhere to and demonstrate gospel principles and teachings, including a continuing emphasis on good sportsmanship.
- ◆ Provide a variety of competitive sports opportunities that meet members’ interests and needs.
- ◆ Plan and schedule appropriate league and tournament play.
- ◆ Call, train, and certify qualified officials.

Sportsmanship - Spirituality

Promoting and displaying good sportsmanship is the responsibility of **all** who participate in these activities, which include: spectators, players, coaches, and officials. Good sportsmanship includes: thoughtfulness and concern for others; fair play - sincere admiration of the skills of teammates, opponents, and officials; and self-control - humility in victory, calmness and composure in defeat. (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Bk.2:Sec.10:p.275*)

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*)

Participants 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, video:53019*)