

How to Encourage Growth and Enhance Recreational Soccer?

The simplest ways to encourage growth of recreational players and programs is to sure that the players get to play in a fun environment.

The "Participation and Pleasure" model works should be used to evaluate and enhance all programs on the state and local level.

Evaluation Checklist

Each program, process, event, competition can be evaluated by the checklist below:

Does the program/completion

- Encourage active participation? ___ yes ___ no
- Allow all players to perform to their capabilities? ___ yes ___ no
- Provide a source of enjoyment? ___ yes ___ no
- Share decisions with the players? ___ yes ___ no
- Value and appreciate opponents and encourage sportsmanship? ___ yes ___ no

If you get yes on all five, you are encouraging growth. You are meeting the recreational player's needs and encouraging their continued participation in the sport.

If You Have "NO", You Have to "Fix It"

For each no answer, you have to "fix it". It's the same process as coaching a team, if you see a problem on the field; you have to "fix it".

If you see a problem in a recreational program, event or such, you have to "fix it"

Effective and pervasive coaching education programs are a major "fix it" for many problems in recreational play.

Education of parents and supporter through Parent Education and other activities is another major "fit it" for many other problems.

Re-evaluation and program redesign is another fit it up tool. Small sided games, festivals instead of tournaments are examples of such re-evaluation and redesign successes.

Effective training of recreational administrators in the basic precepts of recreational soccer also is a good tool to help keep programs true to the basic requirements of the players.

Pitfalls to Guard Against

Programs that are designed well but executed poorly i.e. become too competitive

Administrator who lose focus as to the realities of recreational soccer

Well meaning parents, coaches, administrators and board members who just don't get it – who just don't realize why kids play recreational soccer – to have fun.

Volunteers who want to help solely for the benefits they perceive they can obtain for their player, their team, their organization.

Failure to use the checklist above to identify problems in recreational programs.

Failure to “fix” problems identified by using the checklist.

Focusing on elite players and programs to the detriment of the recreational player and programs.