



Starting a Successful Homeschool Sports Program

A Resource from Homeschool SportsNet

One day on the soccer field, a ten year old homeschooled girl is accidentally knocked down by an older, 11-year old homeschooled boy. During a typical homeschool sports day, these minor infractions are almost commonplace. Ten years later after this little tussle, that boy and girl were united in marriage, they both graduated from a major college, and within the last year, became first-time parents. I was the coach back then directing the sports program (oblivious to the run-in) and the same coach that attended the wedding (now coaching their siblings). I had lunch with the couple this summer at a small restaurant where they introduced me to the staff as the "person responsible for us becoming a couple".

What is HSPN?

HSPN is an acronym for **HomeSchool sPorts Network** and its web-site address is www.hspn.net. The acronym was selected to rhyme with "ESPN" thus making it easier to remember. HSPN is a national non-profit 501 (c)(3) and is incorporated in the state of Virginia. The mission statement of HSPN is:

To support homeschool parents, athletes, coaches, teams and organizations through means of an interactive web-site, newsletters, workshops and free postings.

To provide athletic events for homeschool students in a Christian environment through the use of venues that are designated as Christian sites and well-known for high ideals.

To encourage new start-up teams as well as established organizations by our on-line materials and articles.

To offer homeschool teams the best-fit resources from reliable partners in areas such as sports insurance, uniforms, fund-raising, web-site support, college recruitment and more.

To showcase the talent of homeschool athletes by means of our National Homeschool Scorebord, n-Perspective Stats Manager, Sports Ticker.

To develop a national convention and leadership council.

HSPN's Executive Director, Chris Davis, has been a homeschool coach since 1991 and founded The Homeschool SportsNet in 1997 as a means of locating other homeschool teams in his state of Virginia. Eventually, the Lord opened doors as many people began to search out homeschool teams in their own states. The HSPN web-site contains postings of more than 800 homeschool sports organizations as well as postings from hundreds of parents seeking sports programs in areas where they may or may not be an established organization. Over the years we have watched in amazement in the increase in quality and the addition of sports like tackle football, rugby and even ice hockey.

The Life Cycle of Homeschool Sports

Before your start, take some time and go over the following assessment.... of you! using this checklist

- 1) Why is homeschool sports Important to You?
- 2) What are your main objectives for your homeschool sports program or new team?
- 3) What is your level of sports expertise?
- 4) Will you be the coach, director, organizer, helper, or all of the above?

Defining your sports program

- 1) Will it be recreational?

The content of all material available in this publication are copyrighted by The Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated. All rights are reserved and content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, in any form or by means, except with the prior written agreementof, and with express attribution to, the Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated

- 2) Will it be competitive?
- 3) Will it be ultra-competitive? (nothing less than a post-season tournament)
- 4) Will it be just a varsity level?
- 5) What age group(s) can you support?
- 6) What is your estimation of the number of families and children that satisfy your plans?
- 7) Will it be year-round (multi-sport) or a single sport for one season?
- 8) Will your program be added to an existing organization or is this brand new?

Planning your first meeting. Do these things **way in advance** of the meeting

- 1) Use HSPN's team locator <http://www.hspn.net/Teamlocator/> and contact other existing organizations in your state for assistance.
- 2) Post on the team locator page that you are planning to start a new sports program
- 3) Contact your state homeschool organization and get a list of local support groups.
- 4) With advance notice, publish an article or ad in each local support group newsletters announcing your upcoming meeting. Run this in at least 2 consecutive issues
- 5) Social networking with Facebook, Twitter, etc and announce to your followers and friends.
- 6) Find as many email groups and e-newsletters that are close to your area and use that as another way to communicate.
- 7) If you are non-profit, most newspapers will allow for free plugs.
- 8) A web-site is highly recommended be sure to include your contact information.
- 9) Before your first meeting, be sure to line-up your assistants and it is imperative that they attend the meeting as well.
- 10) Secure a venue for the meeting which should be a comfortable sit down environment. Refreshments are recommended and should accommodate visual aids for powerpoint presentation.

Strategies for a successful kick-off meeting

- 1) Always have a plan in mind for a development or Junior team – this is the key to a long-term sports program.
- 2) Be confident of your expectations, but be willing to compromise and have a plan “B”, “C”, etc.
- 3) You must gain acceptance and approval from the parents. As your expectations mesh with theirs, somewhere in the middle is a plan that everyone needs to support. As your sports program matures, things will change over time.
- 4) Do not close the meeting without some level of commitment. You do not want to be in the position where you feel like you are the only one willing to do this. If you don't have the commitment now, you won't have it later, when it is really needed.
- 5) Be ready to have answers for topics like:
 - a. How often are practices? Games?

The content of all material available in this publication are copyrighted by The Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated. All rights are reserved and content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, in any form or by means, except with the prior written agreementof, and with express attribution to, the Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated

- b. Liability Insurance (we cover this topic later)
 - c. Registration and other costs
 - d. Practice facilities (we cover this topic later)
 - e. Uniforms (we cover this topic later)
- 6) Have all hand-outs available (always bring extras).
 - 7) If you have the support that you need, follow this meeting up with another parents meeting about a month before the season starts and begin your registration process.
 - 8) If you feel that the support is not there, then you will need to “ratchet-down” your expectations, or draw from a wider area, or start with a younger set of ages. Then do steps 1 through 10 again.
 - 9) If the results are still not what you were hoping for, then God just hasn’t opened that door yet.

Things that a homeschool team will need

- 1) A web-site is your calling card for and communication tool.
- 2) Sports Liability Insurance. Nowadays it is pretty much required for you to carry liability insurance if you are going to use a facility or a venue. **HSPN members are eligible to purchase Homeschool Liability Insurance.** <http://www.hspn.net/Insurance/>
- 3) Location of practice facilities and venues for games
 - a. Church with an indoor gymnasium and/or large property (for outdoor sports).
 - b. Parks & Rec - they usually are the ones to check with for scheduling some time in local gymnasiums.
 - c. YMCA
 - d. Community Centers
 - e. Large Property Owners/Farmers
 - f. Schools, Public and Private
 - g. Colleges
 - h. 4-H Center
 - i. Former Military Bases
 - j. Town Parks
 - k. Sportsplex
 - l. If you can practice during the day, then it is much easier to find a wider selection of venues.
- 4) Post your new team and logo on the HSPN team locator page <http://www.hspn.net/Teamlocator/>

The content of all material available in this publication are copyrighted by The Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated. All rights are reserved and content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, in any form or by means, except with the prior written agreementof, and with express attribution to, the Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated

- 5) Short-term and long-term coaches.
- 6) Fund-raisers and people willing to fundraise
- 7) Uniforms <http://www.hspn.net/Articles/fullstory.asp?id=5316>
- 8) Registration process
 - a. We recommend adding on-line registration to your web-site and use Cornerstone Payments <http://www.hspn.net/Articles/fullstory.asp?id=5328>
 - b. Downloadable forms should also be available on your web-site
- 9) Community Relationships with...
 - a. Local media – have them come out and see your team
 - b. Network with other schools, clubs, referee associations – let them know about you.
 - c. Maybe you barter with some organizations by trading some work for the use of their fields or courts.
- 10) Athletic Director to schedule practices, games and officials
- 11) Team Photographer – build your team profile and enhance your web-site with your team in action. This creates curiosity and interest from your potential future players. It also encourages team pride within your organization.
- 12) Statistician - **Using HSPN's Stat Manager**, you can keep a lifetime profile of all your player's stats in basketball, soccer and football. <http://www.hspn.net/Articles/fullstory.asp?id=4902>
- 13) Post Your Team Standings – using HSPN's **National Homeschool Scoreboard** <http://www.hspn.net/HSPN247/>
- 14) Post your Game Schedules – using HSPN's **National Homeschool Scoreboard** <http://www.hspn.net/HSPN247/>
- 15) Post your Final Scores – using HSPN's **National Homeschool Scoreboard** <http://www.hspn.net/HSPN247/>

Ready for Competition

- 1) Setting Goals – the HSPN web-site is full of examples of what opportunities are available regardless of the level of competition your sports program. Whether the goal is just for recreation, or you seek one of HSPN's championships, look over the site for more details.
- 2) Homeschool Athletic Leagues – look at Indiana for example
- 3) Homeschool State Athletic Associations – check out North Carolina, for example.
- 4) Joining Conferences with Christian Schools
- 5) Homeschool Football Leagues and Championships
- 6) Pre-Season Tournaments
- 7) Post Season Tournaments – For 15 years HSPN has been directing large homeschool tournaments <http://www.hspn.net/Events/>

The content of all material available in this publication are copyrighted by The Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated. All rights are reserved and content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, in any form or by means, except with the prior written agreementof, and with express attribution to, the Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated

Real Success will be achieved not so much through the wins and banners, but if you remember to do these things, you will be satisfied beyond the scoreboard...

- 1) Keep your sports program a “Friend Factory” constantly pumping out life-long relationships from season to season
- 2) Honor your team(s) with some type of Sports Banquet
- 3) As years go by and you start accumulating alumni, do something special each year for your alums.
- 4) Always “grade” your past season and be willing to correct and change where necessary
- 5) Be “Jesus” for your players and boldly profess Christ and lead your “leaders of tomorrow”
- 6) Make the new families welcome and let your current players shine by making new friends
- 7) Stay patient and excited as you live the challenge of building a polished program that is done in a way that makes God proud
- 8) May all coaches become the “The Hugged” and “The Hugger”

Keep your players grounded in this order: “Christian-Student-Athlete”

If you have any questions, feedback, or comments, please send to: info@hspn.net

The content of all material available in this publication are copyrighted by The Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated. All rights are reserved and content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, or transferred, in any form or by means, except with the prior written agreementof, and with express attribution to, the Homeschool SportsNet, Incorporated