

January 9, 2012



Travel Players playing in the SMYS Recreation Program

At the December 2011 SMYS Executive Board Meeting, we had a spirited discussion regarding SMYS allowing travel players to play in the SMYS recreation program. As the SMYS Director of Coaching, I was asked to provide the EB with further thoughts and recommendations.

What are the pros and cons of allowing a travel player to play in the SMYS recreation program (for both the REC player & Travel player):

For the REC player

PRO: Would allow the REC player to train with a travel player.

CON: For training, there is no CON, having travel players integrated in REC practices would always be helpful to the REC team, the individual players and their coach(es). However, this can be accomplished without travel players playing in the REC program. This can be established through a club-wide team mentorship program that would build a bridge between travel and rec/recplus programs.

PRO: Would allow the REC player to learn from watching the travel player in games.

CON: While the PRO is nice, this is a major CON to the REC player... On game day the travel player is likely to get more touches than the REC player(s). The tendency will be for the travel player(s) to score the teams goals/create the team's goals. This will lead to dependency of that REC team on the travel player and more importantly, will take away the needed opportunities that the REC player would have had if the travel player wasn't there... Some REC players may rarely see the ball from the travel player if in that players mind; they will lose possession, etc. (this would be the travel players mind set because, they are a travel player). The PRO can be accomplished as mentioned previously through some training opportunities at a club level.

For the TRAVEL player

PRO: Would allow the travel player more playing time in games if they are not getting enough on their travel team.

CON: The fact is that this playing time will not make them a better player because they are playing against recreational players that are not going to provide the challenge needed and/or level of competition they need to improve. The REC game is a much differently played game from a travel level game. Additionally, they may indeed pick up some bad technical habits and take them unknowingly to their travel games making what we thought could have been a PRO a CON!

My Recommendation

Based on my many years of experience in working clubs, youth soccer and player development, I honestly cannot really say that there are enough "advantages" of allowing travel players to additionally play in the REC program.

It's my belief that those players are doing so because they want the freedom to do whatever they want on the field (that they can't do or their coaches won't allow them to do) in travel games. This takes away from the "purpose" of having a true recreation program and to the kids that we are serving at that level. If a travel player really wants to become a better player, it's going to be done through training additional training opportunities, not from playing in the club's recreational program.

It is my recommendation to the SMYS EB that travel players not be allowed to play in the recreational program.