



# ESTABLISHING YOUR SPORTS RECOGNITION PROGRAM

It's no secret that everyone likes a little recognition, and for kids, it can be a determining factor when deciding to stay with a sport or not. A recent survey of parents conducted by TNS Worldwide reported that more than 76% of parents support recognizing a player's contribution and participation. Parents also said that feedback from the coach was a key component of their child's sports experience.

**Here are tips for starting or enhancing your youth sports recognition program:**

- **Look to the End of the Season First.** Determine what type of recognition program you want. Check to see if your sponsoring organization provides trophies or ribbons, and if so, how and when you will receive them. Be sure that you will have them well in advance of the season's end.
- **Make Notes.** At the start of the season, keep a log via a notebook or smart phone with notes on each player's progress. These notes will be helpful at the end of the season when recognizing each player for their individual effort and improvement throughout the season.
- **Recognize Regularly.** Remember to make recognition part of every practice and game, match, or event. Point out positive traits, new skills learned, and good sportsmanship. Make specific comments instead of blanket statements.
- **Catch Them in Action.** Ask parents to catch action photos of each player and have them print out the best shots. Distribute the photos with their awards.
- **Make It an Event.** Plan an end-of-season event. This is a great way for a noncoaching parent to get involved. Whether pizza or pot luck, get great ideas by visiting sites like Pinterest.com to search for "end of season party" or the name of your sport. Ask—or assign—families to bring items.
- **Be Specific.** Have a plan for each child. Don't wing it. Determine how each player contributed to the team. Be specific. Instead of saying, "You worked hard," point out something specific to each child such as saying, "Your batting average improved" or "Your ball handling skills and assists increased." This is the difference between a participation award and a recognition award.

Using these tips will make your players' experience and your coaching tenure something you will all remember for years to come. We are more than happy to help you select the appropriate items to help recognize your team!