



Putnam County Parks & Recreation

P.O. Box 758
Palatka, FL 32178
386/329-1268

The following is the Philosophy of Athletics Programs offered by the Putnam County Parks and Recreation Department.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines recreation as: refreshment of one's mind or body after work through activity that amuses or stimulates: play.

With this definition in mind, we have decided to ensure that we give children the opportunity to play. We have decided to modify our scorekeeping procedures; we will still keep scores but the score will not be used to determine standings. We will no longer offer trophies to those who finish in a certain place; we will still offer participation medals for all. There are many reasons for this and we will try to explain them as best we can.

- A. The Parks and Recreation Department serves as a building block for future sporting activities. Our goal is twofold with this approach, 1) expose children to sports to give them the opportunity to play as well as 2) teach the basics and fundamentals of those sports.
- B. We are in a unique position to be the 4th "R" for children. We want them to be able to learn and attempt a sport with little or no pressure on winning at this early stage of development. We know that the spirit of competition will develop naturally over time in those who wish to continue on with a particular sport or activity. We also know though, that some children may not want to compete in this particular sport, yet they want to play.
- C. There are ample opportunities outside of the department for children to compete in a particular sport and we encourage attendance and participation in those activities. We also realize that most schools offer similar activities and we encourage participation in those as well.
- D. We will make every effort to offer programs that children want to participate in. we will also offer these activities in a venue that fosters learning and teaches teamwork and leadership in accordance with the Florida Parks and Recreation Associations "It Starts in Parks" message campaign.

This policy will not affect events such as Men's Softball, Co-ed Softball or special events such as the Turkey Trot 5K road race.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact us at 386-329-1268.

Reasons for the change:

1. Parents PAY money for their child to play a sport, not to practice the sport. If their expectation is that the child will play for half of every game regardless of practice attendance, then that's what their paying for; unless this becomes a safety issue where the child may hurt themselves or someone else.
2. We want to encourage children to play a sport without regard to the "I've never done this before and don't want to embarrass myself" mindset. Face it, some kids, especially as they get older are hesitant about playing a sport if they have never tried it. They don't want to be ridiculed by their teammates or peers for being the reason their team lost the game.
3. Coaches can sometimes place more emphasis on winning than on playing the game. We don't want our coaches, parents or children to feel the pressure to "win at all costs"; this is counter productive to sportsmanship fundamentals that were trying to teach.
4. Teams are not set up to be "competitive". A coach is not a paid employee; the coach has to arrange practices around their own work schedule and family life as well as that of the rest of the team. The coach must play every player on his team for at least half of every game, regardless of practice attendance. For the most part the coach doesn't know or is not familiar with the majority of the players on his team. There is no "tryout" process. The league is open to everyone regardless of skill level. That doesn't create a recipe for winning.
5. Our primary goal is to TEACH kids about sports and the basics and fundamentals of each sport they play. We also want to expose the kids to as many sports as possible so when they get to the high school level, they can decide whether or not they want to play a sport based on experience rather than an uneducated guess.
6. The "spirit of competition" will be learned naturally by every child. After a child has experienced the emotions tied to winning and the emotions tied to losing, they soon figure out that winning is a lot more fun than losing. That process, by most studies, begins around first grade when the kids are racing each other around the playground.
7. We are in no way saying that competition in and of its self is bad. We believe in competition and feel that it is completely appropriate under certain conditions, but not all. We are also not saying that mediocrity should be the norm. There is an appropriate place for all levels of competition in sport, we just don't feel our venue is the one to encourage a competitive spirit.

I promise you that in almost every case, a child would rather PLAY in the game for 15 minutes and lose, than SIT on the sidelines for 45 minutes and win.