

Wilton Soccer Association
Special Board Meeting Minutes
May 7, 2012
Comstock Community Center

Board Member Attendees: Scott Vanderwall, Andy Hoffmann, Patti Hoffmann, Pete Connolly, Eric English, Bryce Brichkowski, Sandra Adams, Lisa Smith, Russ Schmidt, and Heather Jung

Absent: Bob Cramer, Jim Newfield, Kris Forland

Non Board member attendees: approximately 50 members

7:35 p.m. Scott Vanderwall, Co-President, called the meeting to order.

Retention Presentation: Sandra Adams, Bryce Brichkowski and Heather Jung present the retention presentation. It was first discussed as to the reasons why players are dropping out of the WSA. Reasons include focusing too much on winning, inappropriate parent/coach behavior, children overspecialization in sports at younger ages, players leaving for premier, players leave for other sports, players upset when cut from travel, 2 season commitment, cost, tournament commitments, and parents not satisfied with the organization.

Fall 2011 numbers were analyzed. There were 165 total players in Kindergarten and there were 82 total U14 players. We lose most of our players between U9 and U10 with a 25% decrease and again between U10 and U11 with a 22% decrease.

Spring 2011 numbers were analyzed and showed travel tryouts are not retaining players. On the boys' side across all ages, there were a total of 238 boys trying out for 151 spots; 34 players went to Academy and 53 players left the WSA equating to a 22 % of players leaving the WSA. On the girl's side across all ages, there were a total of 243 girls trying out for 192 spots; 17 players went to Academy and 34 players left the WSA equating to a 14% of players leaving the WSA.

Using spring 2012 travel division placement data, it was shown the WSA's current model does not develop teams capable to competing in the SWD A division. 33% of Boys teams play in the SWD A Division and 36% of Girls teams play in the SWD A division.

During the presentation, many members who stood up to speak as to why kids leave the WSA as well as anecdotes from various sports seem to be successful with retention such as football and lacrosse.

Enhancing the Player/Parent Experience: Scott Vanderwall described that part of the retaining players should be enhancing the player experience. He, then, conducted an open session for members to share ideas based on the following topics.

A. Nutmeg Tournament

- Raise \$\$
- Both Academy and Travel Teams compete
- Out of town teams
- Food & Gear
- Central Location for scoring, food, etc.
- Sponsors
- Lilly finals under lights
- Have partner town
- Exhibition game
- Kids Zone

B. Coaching

- Winters Coaches/WSA
- Retention of coaches
- Continuity from season from season
- Continuity by age group
- K-2 coaches should come to games
- More attendance by professionals to Academy games
- Varsity players to be assistant coaches
- H.S. coach involvement earlier
- Professional assistant coaching director
- Parents training on how to coach
- More discipline

C. Program Structure

- K-2, Academy, Travel, Top Soccer
- Academy
 - Blur programs between Academy and Travel
 - Academy have alternates on travel
 - House league on Saturdays – mandatory travel participation
 - Same uniform as travel
 - Competition/tournament
- K-2
 - Balanced teams – evaluate players
 - Coaches should help with evaluations
 - Practice by teams
 - Uniforms
 - 2nd grade games in spring scheduling boys am, girls pm
- Travel
 - Create seasonal fall/spring teams
 - More teams
 - Compete with premier
 - More competitive
 - DISCIPLINE (mentioned several times)
 - Age specific programming
 - Combine age groups (older ages)

- Add out of town players
- Parent education – premier – parents/players
- Environment – discipline and structure
- More practice time 3x per week in fall
- Speed, agility training on 3rd practice
- Align birthdays for travel

D. “Off the Field”

- Organize kids event to Red Bulls games
- Work with Boosters High School
- Watch high school games
- Wilton soccer magnets for cars
- Spirit gear
- Volunteer picnic day
- Azul game
- Host college team at Lilly field
- High school kids involved with younger grades
- High school kids help at Nutmeg
- TV events
- Survey the kids
- Spirit day in school on specific day

E. Communication

- Communications timeliness
- State of club from president
- Field labels
- Emails – put team name first in cc: line
- Academy started earlier – too chaotic
- Every child receives welcome kit with stickers

F. Volunteers – the WSA would not run smoothly without the help of volunteers. Members of the audience were encouraged to sign a volunteer form on the way out.

There were many discussions and comments made to compile this list. There were a number of issues mentioned several times such as the need for discipline and structure on the travel teams, more integration between academy and travel programs, the need for continuity of coaches, the differentiation between soccer being a fall and spring sport commitment, the difference in competitiveness between different teams, and the need for soccer to become more inclusive as compared with football and lacrosse.

10:00 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Heather Jung, Secretary.