

Modifying Activities

Lack of confidence in ability, being a novice amongst more experienced players, lack of knowledge about rules and game tactics can be significant deterrents for newcomers into sport. This can be particularly impacting when player sections are based largely on age.

Some clubs offer social, less competitive and less structured opportunities to broaden the participation options in a bid to broaden the interest, club membership and income.

The following club initiatives may stimulate some new ideas:

- **Pay As You Play Day** – Tennis club sets aside Friday mornings for people of all ages and abilities to come along and play. Participants pay \$3 per session attended and are grouped into a social team according to who is there on the day.
- **Six-a-Side Hockey** – Hockey Association sets up small pitch social hockey played evenings through daylight savings and pitched at uni teams, school teams, workplace team, groups of friends. Emphasis on social and learning to play in preparation for the winter season – modified rules which made it safer, less demands on fitness and less scary – softer ball etc.
- **Kick to Kick** – Football Club invites people new to football, those who can no longer play, women who would like a go... to a series of free weekly training sessions run specifically for this group. The sessions were instructional, allowed people to self pace and participate in some modified minor game play. The focus was new members and new people interested in the club, potential volunteers.
- **Touch Football in the Park** – Touch Club takes its game to the people by setting up informal Touch social matches in local parks. Smaller pitch layout with less players made it less physically demanding. People in the park could enter into the game at any time. Club gave people fliers about the season start.
- **Active Girls Triathlon** – Triathlon Club runs a very short triathlon (with swim in the pool) targeted at girls who had never tried a triathlon before. Girls were recruited through schools and encouraged to participate in teams. A follow up short course series aimed to attract a few to continue.
- **Twilight Family Softball** – Softball Club runs a summer twilight series for families to come together to play unstructured softball at no cost. The club provides BBQs so that families could bring dinner down and uses the series as a promotion for the club and some fun leading into their winter season.
- **Beginner Nights** – Tennis Club runs a 5 week evening beginner series offering coaching and equipment for people to come and improve / try tennis. The Club Coach uses it to recruit for tennis lessons and the Club to recruit new players. Participants pay nominal fee to pay for light use.
- **Keen-Agers Table Tennis** – Table Tennis enthusiasts set up friendly competition aimed at older adults and retirees. Low cost, daytime and promoted through falls prevention, cardiac rehab, probus groups.

New participation options are easier to come up with when you understand the needs of the groups you are trying to cater for. E.g. a local mid-week tennis competition failed because players had to travel and could not get back to their home towns in time for school pick up. (It clearly missed the mark!)

The types of things that can be modified:

- The emphasis – social, fun, for beginners, for the complete novice
- Scoring or not keeping any records of results
- Keeping a ladder or not – just for fun
- Rules that make it safer, easier for beginners to succeed
- Playing area (size)
- Handicapping to mix the success
- Number of players on the field (less means each person can keep more involved)
- Goals (height or distance)
- Equipment (size, height and weight)
- Duration of game (reduce time, increase breaks)

Not all people are interested, have the physical capability, skills, or confidence to participate in your sport in its traditional format. Why not try something new to attract those that your sport has not attracted.