

# Play Ball

## Club Recruitment Ideas

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## FOREWORD

Running a sporting club is a demanding and challenging experience and recruiting new members is one of the more difficult tasks that club administrators are faced with.



An important strategy for attracting new members is to have a range of options to choose from, and this is the background to the information provided on the following pages.

The ability to think outside the square and experiment with a number of different recruiting strategies will help you to recruit new members. Experience has shown that there isn't one way that fits all, but there might be one or several that are better for you than others.

Most of the strategies listed here are typical of recruitment activities already being used in Play Ball centres around Australia. If you need more ideas or would like to get in touch with other clubs in the program, contact your state or national body.

Good luck!

# ABOUT SCHOOLS AND CLUBS

(Some information courtesy of Aussie Sport paraphernalia circa 1995)

## **Before you start**

Contact your state association to find out how they currently work with schools, and what special programs and resources have been developed to assist them. You may be able to link into an existing program or get some valuable advice on working with schools.

Recognise that schools and teachers generally are very protective of their students and are sometimes fearful that people outside of the teaching profession may not be sensitive to the needs of all students. For example, schools are committed to making sure that all students have the opportunity to participate regardless of ability, that sport is fun for everyone and that all students develop (both socially and physically) through the experience.



## **Identify what you are trying to achieve**

The next step is to look at what your club wants to achieve and look at ways in which working with schools could help achieve this. Be specific and plan ahead. There is little point offering coaching clinics to the schools in a bid to recruit players for the current season if the teams are already full and there is no hope of adding additional teams.

## **Be realistic in what you can offer**

If none of your club's accredited coaches are available during school hours, don't offer the local school coaching clinics during school hours. Also, consider the consequences of a recruitment drive. Extra players require extra coaches, officials, etc. Think ahead and identify ways that you can cope with this additional demand.

## **Find out about education protocols**

Many state education departments have quite strict requirements for non-teachers who are working with school students, particularly those acting in place of a teacher. These requirements are often based on legal responsibility for the students. If you're not sure of the appropriate procedures, contact your state association.

## **Identify what your club is able to offer**

Don't underestimate the expertise that is contained within your club. As well as being able to benefit from links with local schools, most sporting clubs and associations are able to offer a great deal. Here are some ideas:

- Identify if there are teachers among your existing club membership and utilise those persons to initiate relationships with their schools.
- Adopt a school!
- Offer use of facilities and resources, etc to create a link between the school and your club.
- Offer help to the school staff with sport-specific skills, officiating and administration.
- Offer assistance with the selection and coaching of a school team.
- If your club has a high profile player, offer their services for speaking to the kids.
- Provide advice on the appropriate modifications to the sport for a specific age group.
- An advertisement in the local school newsletter promoting your club through a calendar of events is an effective way of letting the community know what is going on in your club.

***There are many ways a club can link with a local school. Approach a school today and build a path for students to your club's door!***

# RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND IDEAS



## I. Come 'n' Try Days

Come 'n' Try days are an effective way of promoting your club to the local community. They attract potential new members to your club and the involvement of the community and publicity you may receive gives your club a competitive edge over other sporting clubs in your area. Your club's credibility can be enhanced through your involvement with the local community and your efforts to promote your club to local schools.

### **Step by Step Guidelines to Conducting a Come 'n' Try Day**

- a) Have a clear vision of your Come 'n' Try day including the theme and the duration. Will it be activity focused or will it have a carnival atmosphere? Will it go for a whole day or just a morning?
- b) Set a date and construct a timeline giving yourself at least six weeks planning time. It may be necessary to establish a committee with each member having a specific role. When setting the date, make sure it does not clash with events already being conducted in your area. However, aligning your event with another may in fact enhance its impact, so give this consideration also.
- c) Prepare an event outline that states your aims and objectives, roles and responsibilities, marketing and promotional strategies, Come 'n' Try day activities, schedule and budget. Develop a contingency plan so that you are prepared for inclement weather and other variables.
- d) Contact people in the local community who can support or assist your Come 'n' Try day. Some people you may want to contact are:
  - i. local business to provide sponsorship
  - ii. local police to assist with a fastest pitch competition (radar gun)
  - iii. local media to promote the event
- e) Promote Come 'n' Try day by sending promotional material to local media, schools, community groups, local businesses, supermarkets and other relevant organisations.
- f) Prepare an equipment checklist for the day. You may need to consider a photographer, public address system, registration table and forms, prizes (seek donations from local businesses), music, tee ball equipment, and other promotional items provided by your state and national body. You will also need responsible volunteers to assist with the management of the event.
- g) Allow enough time to set up on the event day. Make sure all areas have been set up and someone is available to oversee its activities.
- h) The event day – GET INTO IT! Appoint one person to act as the convenor for the day.
- i) Follow up the event day with feedback from the participants, send out thank you letters to the supporters of the event.

***There are many ideas you can consider for your Come 'n' Try day. The strategies (and opportunities) are endless.***

## 2. Word of Mouth

Word of mouth can mean many things e.g. 'Bring a Friend' membership drive. Offer rewards or discounts for current players who bring along a new recruit. Suggest that it be coordinated with a specific game that the potential new players can come along and watch. Organise a BBQ afterwards with the opportunity for the kids and their parents to try the skills out. This can be a strategy to assist Come 'n' Try days.



## 3. Shopping Centre Community Noticeboards

Use them; they work! A leaflet with your club's contact details will help expose your club to a broader audience.

## 4. Play Ball Courses

Contact your state association to appoint a Development Officer (DO) to help organise a Play Ball course at your club (suggested duration 6 - 8 weeks). The club helps to advertise this through word of mouth, shopping centre billboards, etc. The course is overseen by the DO for the first two weeks (largely skill-based component), then a trained club-appointed person takes over for the remainder of the course. At the end of the course, the club members organise inter-squad games of a modified nature and then try to encourage games against other local clubs undertaking similar programs. If this is not available then continue to have them play games amongst themselves. The important link is to have the new recruits play in this post course period **in a uniform**. It brings a sense of belonging (to the club) to the new players and their families. It's also important that parents, (who will be present throughout most of the course) be encouraged to assist the Play Ball coordinator during the course activities. This will help them learn the sport, interact with other families and club representatives, and also prepare them for a role in future club activities.

Fee costs for Play Ball courses can be set by the club in consultation with the state association. Income generated should be utilised to train and compensate a club coordinator and develop resources to support the program.

## 5. Club Registration Day

Advertise in the local media, school newsletters, and erect signage at your grounds promoting your sign-on day.

## 6. Club Open Day

Advertise that your club is having an open day where anyone can come to your club grounds to watch training or games. Have a nominated club person available to take visitors through a club and sport orientation. This gives people who are interested in your sport an opportunity to become more familiar with the club prior to joining. Promote your best features to those who attend: teams in all age groups, safety measures in place, club principles, etc.



## 7. Show Me Clinics

Have your club coaching or development staff organise visits to local schools to take classes and show students the skills of the game.

## 8. Gala Days at Clubs

After you've established good working relationships with local schools, possibly through running clinics and the like, organise a one day inter-school competition at your club grounds. Invite all available club personnel to attend and assist.

## How to reshape what a club has to offer.



**(‘What to do with them once you’ve got them in the door....!’)**

*The following information has been adapted from an article that appeared in TEAM magazine, Feb 03.*

The way we join a club to play sport needs a modern-day revamp. Your club might be putting up a barrier before a newcomer even steps in the door because of the limited membership options you provide.

People want the same out of sport as they do out of life and that can be helped along by offering flexible club membership packages. Flexible options show that your club is welcoming, encouraging and understanding of some of the things someone new to your sport or the area may be seeking.

### **Family Membership**

A family membership need not necessarily mean two adults and two children. Families of today come in all shapes and sizes and your club should consider this when setting up membership packages.

A family membership may seem like a standard membership option, but the way you present it can make it anything but traditional. Perhaps your family membership means that grandparents can bring along their grandchildren once a month to play in a round robin tournament. This may mean that you are able to introduce a new age group to your sport, while providing novelty and interest for your existing members.

### **Try-Before-you-Buy Package**

*(This philosophy fits in nicely with the Play Ball course idea listed on page 5.)* One of the greatest barriers to joining any new club or organisation is the fear that you may not fit in with others, may not enjoy the activity as much as you thought you would, or perhaps you may have a change in circumstances that means you have less time to play than you thought. A ‘try-before-you-buy’ membership option takes care of all of these fears.

You can structure this option to provide an introductory period of approximately 6 – 8 weeks, after which participants need to take a full membership. The try-before-you-buy package may be an instalment payment towards the full membership, so it doesn’t cost the participant any more than joining straight up, and also ensures your club can adequately cover the cost of the new member.

### **Session Passes**

Your club may consider offering multi-session memberships. This option operates in a similar way to memberships that can be taken out at swimming pools or golf driving ranges where you are able to purchase a 10 visit card. This option may not suit everyone, but will certainly provide great opportunities for some clubs. Once the member has completed their card they will have had the opportunity to get to know your club and its membership, and may feel comfortable with committing to a full membership — or perhaps simply renew their session pass — a win/win for all!

### **Interim Membership**

An interim membership is a short-term option that a club may offer when a member or potential member is unable to commit to a full term of 12 months. Club members may have upcoming work commitments, medical issues or impending parenthood. The interim membership enables your club to hold onto the member for as long as possible, and also allows the person to continue their involvement for as long as possible. This is a great membership to encourage participation in sport and active recreation for as long as possible.

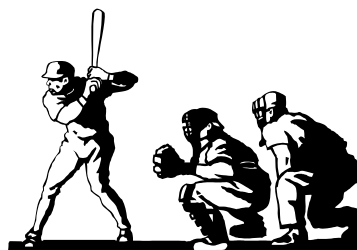
### **Learn-to-Play Membership**

Imagine never having played a particular sport, yet having the desire to learn now. What if the only place the sport is played is within a club setting? The anxiety this can create for some people is enough to push the thought to the back of their minds and go on to take up something else and you may have lost a new member. A learn-to-play membership can cater for the needs of people who are nervous about starting a new sport. It combines a multi-session pass with coaching or tuition sessions.

With a learn-to-play membership the participant can learn the finer points of the game, find out whether the thought of playing it was actually better than the experience, get to know people around the club and decide whether your club is for them.

### **Volunteer Membership**

Often when membership packages are being developed we only consider those who want to play the game. However, clubs are more than just the people making up the team numbers on match days. Without volunteers around your club, it would not exist. That is why a volunteer membership option is so important.



Volunteers want different things from your club from the people who play the sport, therefore should have membership packages that cater for their needs. They do not need access to trained first aiders, they do not need the expertise and skills of the coach, therefore do not build these costs into their memberships. Perhaps they would like to attend workshops and courses: you may wish to build these costs into their packages.

### **Social Membership**

A social membership has long been associated with those clubs that have licensed clubrooms. Social memberships can be tailored to those who want to participate in the sport — not just the post-match celebrations! For the majority of clubs, the main focus is competition and membership packages that are developed to cater for people who want to compete, either individually or as part of a team, for your club. But what about those who see sport as a relaxation activity — with competition the furthest thing from their minds? A social membership allows people to join your club, and utilise the facilities to play your sport socially. They may be restricted as to when they can do so, or you may conduct social days on a regular basis.

### **Associate Membership**

Associate memberships usually have a minimal joining fee and require associate members to pay more each time they play and participate. The high cost of an upfront membership can sometimes be prohibitive to a person wishing to join a club. You can offer an option where the joining fee is significantly reduced while the weekly cost of playing is higher. This way, the member will still pay the same amount over the season, without the high upfront costs. This may also assist the club with a continual cash flow throughout the season.

***These are just a few innovative ideas to attract new members to your club and keep them. If your club has another package that you think is working, please let us know so that we can share it with others — and hopefully make our great community sport and recreation clubs even better and more accessible.***



## Contact Details

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