Power Wheel Chair Soccer:
A program building self-confidence, community and athletic identity
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Background

Children, youth, and young adults who use power chairs are at risk for social isolation and possible loneliness due to physical limitations imposed by their disability. The Houston Fireballs Power Soccer Program addresses the psycho social issues that power chair users may face by offering social engagement, recreation and competitive play in a sports setting.

Building a Program

PLAYER RECRUITMENT:
• Via health staff at a large children's hospital
• Word-of-mouth and social media

PROGRAM NEEDS:
• Facility: full size indoor court
• Staff: program manager and a coach
• Equipment
  – 13” ball
  – Wheelchair Guards w/brackets
  – Goal Posts

COSTS:
• Initial and on-going equipment needs
• Funding resources need to be developed to sustain and expand a successful program

ELIGIBLE PLAYERS:
• Children and youth who use a power chair. Diagnoses may include Muscular Dystrophies, SMA, Cerebral Palsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Spinal Injury, and Myelomeningocele. Age appropriate intellectual ability is necessary

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:
• Local wheelchair vendors, Texas Woman's University Doctoral Physical Therapy students
• Men’s League Soccer Dynamo/National Women’s Soccer League Dash, Annual Charity Match

Significance

Power Soccer provides an opportunity to engage physically in a sport without an attendant. The sport draws the player and their family into a shared experience that is typically not found in the disabled community.

BENEFITS:
• Athletic experience
  – Adrenalin rush
  – Social and emotional engagement
  – May increase self-esteem and autonomy
  – Association with a National Sport USPSA and International Sport (FIPFA)
• Builds teamwork, increases communication, develops leadership skills and promotes motor skill (proprioception and motor planning)
• An opportunity for parents to network and support each other while they experience the joy of watching their child succeed in a setting they thought would never be available

Program Purpose

• Build community for individuals who use power chairs.
• Create a recreational and competitive power soccer team for the Greater Houston Area
• Provide support to develop new power soccer programs in other geographic locales

Player Quote: “It has impacted me a lot because ever since I was a little kid I’ve always wanted to play a sport.” “I wanted a sport where not everyone is a winner but you earn your win.”

Parent Quote: “I never thought I’d be a soccer mom.” “He loves sports and is finally able to join an actual team and it has given him a reason to be proud of himself.”

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www.houstonfireballs.com