

The Saint Louis CYO program has decided that rather than fielding 3rd grade basketball teams to play against other schools during the season, we are going to try out a clinic-based approach for our 3rd graders this year which will run from December through February. Instead of two practices a week, we would have only one and then host optional scrimmages on a number of Sunday afternoons in the winter in our own gym. The practices would all have a discussion component as well with the coaches engaging the kids in topics that relate to how their participation in sports is relevant to their development as a person. This is an approach that mirrors the one used in the very successful Girls on the Run program that is designed to help foster self-esteem and build leadership skills.

We believe this approach has many benefits for our children and families:

- The CYO schedule means that our 3rd graders are rushed into games just a few short weeks after they begin practicing. For many, this is the first time they've had any formal instruction in basketball, and though they've started to learn some basics, the kids get into the heat of the game and often find it hard to remember how they're supposed to dribble, pass, etc. Any good habits you may develop in practice can be quickly lost if they aren't sufficiently solidified. By doing a clinic-based approach, we can really work on all the fundamentals with the kids and help them better master the basics that will serve them for the entire time they play basketball. Indeed, many coaches both at St. Louis and elsewhere believe that people turn into far better basketball players if there is more focus on skills development at young ages, and less focus on playing in games. And because we do recognize that the kids will want to play some games, that's why we will host optional scrimmage sessions on Sunday afternoons in January and February. By then, they will have had more time to learn and absorb the basics, and coaches can supervise scrimmages on half-courts so that they kids can put their skills into play. But without having to worry about winning and losing, and instead, just enjoying the game and what they've learned.
- Two evening practices per week and a game on weekends for 3 full months is a lot for many of our 3rd graders to handle. Some families have found it to be very hard on their kids and their family schedules as they are likely trying to fit in games and activities for other children as well.
- The discussion component will make it clear to our children from their earliest experiences with our CYO program that their participation is about much more than sports alone. That it's about developing skills that will help them as they grow up and through their entire lives. And that by using their God-given talents for the good of their teams, they are engaging in a form of worship and thanks to God.
- And finally, it will also give our new coaches a great opportunity to learn about our CYO program and values, assess the skills and needs of their players in a more genuine way, and to help mold our children as players and people from day one.

We hope you are as excited about this program as we are! Presently, three of our long-standing and finest coaches, Ernie Robinson, Nick Swetz and Geoff McNutt, as well as Sarah Paulus who taught at St. Louis for the past 5 years and wants to remain involved with the school and parish, are working with Parish and School staff to design the program. And we have coaches lined up for the boys and girls as well.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Thanks again for your interest in our program.