



# Where Should My Kid Play?

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My role as Director of Sports Marketing for the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau allows me to have a pretty unique perspective on sports in our community. Couple that with having three daughters who are involved in a variety of activities, I like to think I have a pretty good sense of the climate of youth sports in the Fox Cities. So, I often get asked the question, "Where Should My Kid Play?".

While that is a loaded question, the benefit that we have here is that the Fox Cities has such a rich set of sports offerings, that there is literally something for all ages and skill levels. I would take the programs, teams, coaches, traditions, and venues from our YMCAs, Park & Recreation Departments, community-based teams, and club teams over almost anywhere in the state and the country. We really have it that good here. And when kids advance into high school athletics, it's not surprising that teams in the Fox Cities are annual title contenders in essentially every WIAA sport.

Even though they are great, state championships aren't necessarily the definition of success for participation in youth sports. The process of handling challenges and successes in youth sports are hard to replicate in any other activity today and the associated growth is truly what I believe makes having your kids in a variety of activities so important. So, where should parents look to start that path of rewarding development through sports in the Fox Cities? Here are some good options to consider:

-*All Sports Camps*: Most of the branches of the YMCA of the Fox Cities and Park & Rec Departments around the area offer some version of a program where kids, sometimes as early as 3 or 4 years old, can try a variety of sports in short sessions for a nominal fee.

-*Summer Camps*: Whether it is through the YMCA, Parks & Rec Departments, High School Teams, or Club Teams, there are camps in June and July for basically every activity you can think of. These are a great way to explore a new sport for a few days before committing to a full season.

-*Community Leagues*: Again, our YMCAs and Park & Rec Departments are fantastic and offer a variety of sports leagues that allow kids to experience being on a team and growing in a sport without too much of a time or cost commitment. Also, another alternative depending on the sport and community, many high school programs have feeder teams that start as early as 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

-*Club Teams*: When the time is right, signing up or trying out for a club team can provide a great experience at a more competitive level. Most sports have multiple club options in the area, so consider your choices by searching a listing of clubs through a state or national governing body like: Badger Region Volleyball, Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association, or USA Swimming.

Enjoy the journey through youth sports. The days are long, but the years are short. Feel free to shoot me an email, if I can be of assistance: [mtenhaken@foxcities.org](mailto:mtenhaken@foxcities.org).