



Building Youth Leagues

Appeared in NDA's Member Update March 2012

Franklin Roosevelt once said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." In an ever-changing landscape of technology and distractions, you cannot control what competition lies ahead for your dart leagues. What you can do, however, is create future dart players by getting them involved at a young age. By creating positive, early experiences with the sport of darts, you are sure to create life-long dart players for the future of darting.

Youth and Adult/Junior leagues are a great way to strengthen your dart league structure. Adult/Junior leagues not only create excitement for young players, but also inspire loyalty and excitement from the parents that get to share their love of darts with their children. Despite the benefits of youth league programs, the challenges often keep operators from starting. Here are five challenges and ways to overcoming them:

- 1) **Location** - Since young players may not be able to come to the locations you currently have your machines in, you must think outside of the box (or bar). Look at family fun centers, bowling alleys and fraternal clubs.
- 2) **Commitment** - The commitment level that is required of young players may be a barrier. Get the parents involved and keep your league format flexible.
- 3) **Payouts** - Young players cannot accept cash payouts. Give away trips to theme parks or local attractions instead of cash payouts.
- 4) **Timing** - Finding the right length of time and day of the week to hold your youth league is important. Saturday or Sunday afternoons work well and structuring your formats so games can be played in 1-1 1/2 hours is a good idea.
- 5) **Interest** - Getting a youth league off the ground can be challenging. Start with your current dart players and see if they have kids who are interested in playing. Hold a planning meeting and get parents of the youth players involved early on. The key is to build it and they will come.

Thank you to the NDA Youth Taskforce for their contributions to this article. The NDA Youth Taskforce is currently charged with promoting youth leagues and creating resources for operators to help grow and develop these leagues in order to secure the future of the sport.

NDA Youth Taskforce members include: Dan Larson, Brass Ring Amusement; Robert Nisbet, Bullshooter Dart Federation; Dawn Orloff-Niesen, American Amusement Arcades; Traci Noteboom, Rushmore Amusement, Inc.; Marcia Petersen, Vend Alaska Anchorage; Darko Plazek, Cyberdine d.o.o.; Rabbit Stoddard, Rabbit Darts.