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New Study Finds Limited COVID-19 Transmission During Outdoor Youth Sports in San Diego County

Study offers path forward for San Diego County to safely reopen outdoor youth sports

DEL MAR, CA, August 14, 2020 – Today Surf Cup Sports is announcing the results of an eight-week study analyzing safety of outdoor youth soccer in San Diego County. The county's top youth soccer clubs, led by Surf Cup Sports, have taken the lead on studying the impact of COVID-19 transmission within outdoor youth sports – specifically soccer.

6,560 players and 263 coaches from 6 soccer clubs located across San Diego County, from Oceanside to Chula Vista, participated in the study. Over the course of eight weeks **143,000 soccer sessions** were analyzed and only **15 (.01%)** confirmed cases were found. For each of the identified cases all were found to have been transmitted outside of the soccer sessions.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a dramatic toll on the physical and mental health of kids across San Diego County,” said Brian Enge, CEO, Surf Cup Sports. “The positive value of youth sports has never been more crystal clear and this study indicates that when done correctly, a safe environment for outdoor youth sports is possible.”

With clearance to return to play on June 12, youth soccer clubs across San Diego County have been hosting onsite training sessions for teams weekly. With respect to soccer, early data suggests that the time spent in close proximity to other players during a soccer game is limited and falls far below the duration that is felt to represent sufficient exposure to result in viral transmission.

Research and testing will continue, but initial results show promising signs that outdoor sports in large areas are safe for kids 6-18.

“We are safely ready for the next step in the County's Return to Play planning. Training has presented a 0.0104% transmission and it's our ask to add the variable of controlled game play

to the current, safe environment we've created for our players," said Josh Henderson, National Technical Director, San Diego Surf Soccer Club.

OUR STUDY

INTRODUCTION:

As San Diego continues in Phase 1 of Reopening, activity and game play limited due to increase and growing number of COVID-19 cases in San Diego, soccer players are being negatively mentally impacted without competition. With clearance to return to play on June 12, youth soccer clubs around San Diego County have been hosting onsite training sessions for teams weekly. With respect to soccer, early data seems to suggest that the time spent in close proximity to other players during a soccer game is limited and falls far below the duration that is felt to represent sufficient exposure to result in viral transmission. As research and testing continue to provide clearer answers, it's apparent that outdoor sports in large areas will almost certainly have a lower transmission risk than indoor activities in confined spaces.

METHODS:

We identified 6 top clubs (San Diego Surf Soccer Club, Oceanside Breakers, Carlsbad City, Albion Soccer Club, Rebels Soccer Club and San Diego Soccer Club) that represent the entirety of San Diego County, from Oceanside to Chula Vista. From there, we collected training data from an 8-week period that encompassed total players, sessions and COVID positive cases to track transmission.

RESULTS:

Together, the San Diego soccer community had 6,560 players and 263 coaches participate in over 143,000 soccer sessions with only 15 confirmed cases, all transmitted outside of these soccer sessions – resulting in a **.0104% positive rate per session.**

SAN DIEGO YOUTH OUTDOOR SOCCER COVID TRANSMISSION STUDY
Dates: June 12 to Aug 12

	Surf	Oceanside	City	SDSC	Albion	Rebels	Total
Players	800	450	1,460	1,150	1,500	1,200	6,560
Coaches	35	32	59	50	37	50	263
Weeks of Sessions	8	8	8	8	8	8	
Sessions Per Week	2.5	2	2.6	3	2.5	2.5	
Total Sessions	20	16	20.8	24	20	20	
Total Player Sessions	16,000	7,200	30,368	25,300	30,000	24,000	132,868
Total Coach Sessions	1,400	1,024	2,454	2,400	1,480	2,000	10,758
Number of Positive Player Tests	2	1	5	0	4	1	13
Number of Positive Coach Tests	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Number of Positive Contracted Via Sessions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% of Cases Per Soccer Session	0.0115%	0.0122%	0.0183%	0.0036%	0.0127%	0.0038%	0.0104%
% Cases Per Total Coach/Player Population Over 10 Weeks							0.2198%

Important Note:

*All Positive tests have been associated with external transmission (primarily from siblings)

*No known transmissions have occurred via the soccer sessions

CONCLUSION:

The data tells a clear story - kids playing soccer outdoors in a safe environment do not contract or transmit COVID at a material rate.

When you add this data to the following recently released reports from the Elite Clubs National League (ECNL) and the CDC – our argument becomes even stronger.

Since May, 2020:

- Physical activity levels dropped by an alarming 50% compared to pre-COVID levels. If extrapolated to the rest of the country, this could be the least physically active that children have ever been.
- Following the widespread cancelation of school and spring sports, 33% (up from 10%) 38% reported moderate to severe depression and 35% reported moderate to severe anxiety.
- Females have been particularly affected, with 40% and 45% reporting moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety, respectively.
- National CDC data confirms the risk of hospitalization for children aged <18 years is extremely low. The CDC's July 25th report on Morbidity and Mortality cites a total of 576 hospitalizations for kids under 18 since March 1, 2020

DISCUSSION:

We are urging San Diego City and County officials to allow Surf and handful of partner clubs to create a pilot program to take the next step. We want the data and the science to drive safe decision making for our kids. Our study shows we've created a safe environment for outdoor sports in San Diego County and we are asking for the City and County to follow the Scientific Method and allow us to carefully add the variable of game play in a controlled pilot setting. We've already presented the pilot to the City and are waiting for a response. We aren't pushing to open the flood gates on competitive play, rather to allow this group of clubs to take the next step, study the impacts of that step and then move forward accordingly.

References:

1. ECNL Understanding the Impacts of Inactivity on Youth Athletes Report- <https://www.eliteclubsnationalleague.com/2020/08/04/a-balancing-act-understanding-the-impacts-of-inactivity-on-youth-athletes/>
2. CDC, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, July 25, 2020- <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932e3.htm>