

ADMINISTRATOR PROFILE

JERRON MOORE

BY ED PASSINO



The 25-acre Optimist Youth Sports Complex in Boise, Idaho is home to nine fields, a stocked pond, a concession stand and equipment facility built in large part because of fundraising led by Jerron Moore.

Football dreams run deep through Idaho's Treasure Valley, a stretch of land that glides through the Sawtooth Mountain Range and engulfs the city of Boise.

For many youths living in a region dominated by rivers, mountains and wildlife, fantasies of football stardom and achievement begin in Boise Noon Optimist Youth Football.

Since its inception in 1949, Boise Noon Optimist Youth Football has been the dream-maker for more than 65,000 youth football players. Over the years, the program has had its share of former players advancing to college and NFL stardom, such as former NFL quarterback Jake Plummer and Houston Texans tight end Jeb Putzier.

However, the most influential alumnus just might be its current executive director, Jerron Moore.

Moore, a veteran youth coach of 27 years in the program, first became involved as a player more than four decades ago as a fourth-grader.

"As a youth player you never think to yourself, 'one day I'm going to coach or be the commissioner of the league,'" stated Moore, who played in the Optimist program from 1965-1968 and later excelled at Meridian High School before playing junior college football at

Walla Walla Community College.

But, after three knee surgeries ended his college playing career, Moore found himself back in "The Valley," as the area is commonly referred to by locals. It was at that time Moore, who was attending Boise State University, decided to give back to the youth football program that had given him a lifetime of positive memories and experiences as a youngster.

"You get hooked, and quickly," said Moore about his first year of coaching.

Twenty-seven years later Moore is still engaged in the sport and can

be found each autumn on the sidelines. In 1994, Moore became the Optimist program's executive director.

As the executive director, Moore works with a 72-member staff that oversees nearly 200 teams, 4,000 youth players and countless cheerleaders.

Under Moore's leadership and the help of a strong, supportive executive board of volunteers, the Optimist program forged a partnership in the mid-1990s with the City of Boise to build a 25-acre community park with sports fields to support the growing football program. The agreement was simple – if the Optimist program raised the funds, developed the land and built the fields, the

program would receive exclusive use of it in the fall and spring. The remainder of the time the Optimist Youth Sports Complex would be a city park to be used by anyone.

Ground broke in 1997 and two years later the nine-field, 400-parking space sports complex, which also includes a stocked pond, a concession stand and equipment facility, became the official home of Boise Noon Optimist Youth Football.

The facility was built at no cost to taxpayers. Instead, Moore and the Optimist team of volunteers hit the streets of Boise with a fundraising campaign that included going door-to-door to corporations, businesses and community members.

"The community stepped up," says Moore. "You walk anywhere in this Valley and talk to people about Optimist football you'll find most everybody has been touched by it.

"The community has been amazing. We went out and knocked on doors and began raising money, a number of people have stepped up. We've had close to \$400,000 in

donated time, labor, and services in-kind."

Moore is quick to point out that Plummer continues to give the program tremendous support and has donated \$100,000 and sponsored the development of a field. Plummer also routinely returns to conduct the Jake Plummer Youth Football Camp for local youth players during the summer months.

The sport complex has had a positive effect

country where there is accessible land, and a passion for youth football.

"Don't underestimate the power of your community. For me it was easy to walk into corporate offices, homes and sell our program," Moore says.

"For us we had a tremendous program to sell – our program is not about championships or excluding kids – its about kids living in the

community, playing together on the same team with the same coaches for four years. Our program is not about the best kids; it's about all kids – that resonates with kids, parents and corporate America. We are about competition – it's not a bad word – but we do it in a context that is very healthy and very positive. When you have a product like that, it's easy to sell. You just have to



on the Optimist program as participation numbers have steadily increased each year by 10 percent. Shortly after the completion of the 25-acre complex, the Optimist program worked with the City of Boise to secure 27 additional acres of land adjacent to the current facility.

The additional land will produce seven more football fields and an additional 600 parking spaces. When completed later this summer, the entire 52-acre sports complex will house 16 fields, 1,000 parking spaces, two stocked ponds, two tennis courts, a concession stand and equipment shed.


"When we're done with this project we will have raised \$3 million that has been donated for kids of this community to play football. I'm not sure there are many places in the country that can say that," says Moore, who in 2003 was honored with the Don Simplot Idaho Award, which is given annually to an Idaho resident who demonstrates leadership and selfless service to sport.

Moore believes this sports complex project can be mirrored anywhere throughout the

believe in it."

Moore is quick to deflect the recognition for the healthy state of the Optimist program and the sports complex.

"I get way too much credit for what has happened here with this program and field project, the reality is the work, the effort was way more than just one person," he says.

"There are so many people in the Valley and in our football program that made this happen, I'm just fortunate because I'm a better person for having been with them and worked with them." 

Editor's note: If you would like more information about the Optimist Youth Sports Complex and details about Boise Noon Optimist Youth Football agreement with the City of Boise check out: http://www.cityofboise.org/parks/parks_facilities/parks/index.aspx?id=OYSC_park_facts and <http://www.boiseoptimist.com/>. You can also send an email to Ed Passino at leaguedevelopment@usafootball.com for more information about the project.