

# Networking with the Austin Sports & Social Club

By Matt Casserly

**O**moved away from Austin after I graduated from the University of Texas in 2004 to go live with a friend of mine in Venice, California... on the beach. It seemed like a logical thing to do after 22 years of regular schooling.

After a layoff in 2005, I had two choices:

**1) Collect unemployment in California while searching for a job and living off of scraps; or**

**2) Collect unemployment from California in Houston living with my parents while raising a cute chihuahua until I mooched enough tax-payer money from another state to get back to where my heart was: Austin, Texas.**

After living the beach bum lifestyle for a year, which one would you choose? (P.S. Thanks, Mom and Dad.)

When my puppy turned six months old, we moved to Austin in search of a new life. Fortunately, I found a job only a week after returning. Unfortunately, I couldn't find my friends. The network I had amassed while in college had gone from a jam-packed SIM card to three people I knew through my ex-girlfriend. Everyone had moved away and gone on to bigger and better things. I had already done that, and I had returned to a seemingly empty city. The time for change had come. I needed some new friends.

I heard about the Austin Sports and Social Club (Austin SSC) on the radio through occasional advertisements, and it sounded like a great way to meet active people. Even better: it was a co-ed club, and it sounded like a great way to meet female people (wink). Since I was a fairly active person, I thought I would fit right in. There were tons of sports to choose from with two divisions of play in each (a social division for the athletic and a super social division for the less athletic that enjoy the socialization aspect of the game more than the game itself). Each sport offered was guaranteed at least six games, and you could drink beer during all of them (win-win). Softball seemed like a safe bet, and since I had never played baseball when I was younger (I was a very... rotund child), I signed up by myself in the super social division.

About two weeks later, I received an e-mail from the club saying that I was a member of the Tightly Whities – quite possibly the worst-assembled softball team ever. Don't get me wrong, we had our SportsCenter Top 10 Plays moments (duh-nuh-nuh, duh-nuh-nuh). But as a bunch of random people grouped together, we did not mesh well on a 325-foot softball field. We did, however, have a lot of fun throwing back beers and going to happy hour at the club-sponsored bar, Docs. After tallying up a 1-5 record on my first organized sports team in about 15 years and actually enjoying myself, I decided that I needed to play another sport.



Flag football was offering sign-ups, and memories of winning Turf Bowl 1989 in Katy, Texas (the little league flag football championship), danced in my head. I knew it was time to return to the game that captured my interest so long ago.

I signed up for flag football in the super social division again (championships from over 15 years previous didn't constitute "social"-caliber play). This is where I ended up meeting my beautiful girlfriend and the team that became my new circle of friends in Austin. It turns out that we all signed up for the same reason – we wanted to meet new people. Some people signed up individually, others signed up with their significant others. Either way, it was an excellent method of expanding the social circle. After our first season, we made it to the playoffs (as a pot-luck team!), and we went undefeated in season two. It was a victorious feeling I hadn't experienced in years, and I got to share it with a bunch of people I am still close friends with today.

I've been playing in the Austin Sports and Social Club for the past two years, and I've been a part of some winning teams and plenty of losing teams. Somehow, no matter what, our teams always manage to have a

good time. The formula of getting people over the age of 21 together with alcohol and competitive sports works extremely well.

Currently, the club offers flag football, softball, sand and indoor volleyball, wiffleball, soccer, kickball, dodgeball, and bowling. Austin SSC is also moving into the racing circuit with the first annual Austin SSC Austin 10K PLUS on August 17, 2008 (the "PLUS" is due to the number of

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obstacles runners will encounter along the course). You can sign up as an individual or as a team of two.

With the year-round sporting opportunities, I've also manage to stay pretty fit. Due to all of the conditioning that sports require, club members have to re-introduce themselves to the training regiments familiar to high-school and college athletes. Since joining the club, I've gained muscle mass, run a 10K, and even completed the Austin Marathon.

As of the time I write this article, I am a member of a sand volleyball team (0-3) and a softball team (3-1), and I plan on joining a dodgeball team in the near future. I'm even dating a star receiver from our championship-winning flag football team (a perk that comes with being dubbed team captain). The club also serves as a great way to expand your wardrobe. With each season comes a brand new shirt from a different area of the color spectrum. So, if you're new to town, you just need a change, or you simply want a cool shirt with beer and club logos on it, Austin SSC has activities for you. In the words of my girlfriend, "Austin SSC is a great place to meet friends, acquaintances, or if you are really lucky, a nice southern gentleman." So, sign up! Or you'll never meet your own southern gentleman. For additional information regarding Austin SSC, visit <http://www.austinssc.com/>.