



**HOLLANDIA**

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Boarded Soccer Experience  
Indoor 2016-2017

Member Survey Results

Prepared by Hollandia Soccer Club  
February 2017

## Background

During preparation for indoor 2016-2017 discussions were held at the SYSI PCC committee table regarding the possible introduction of a recreational boarded league in Saskatoon. It was felt at the time that there are not enough players currently in league play to support the introduction of an additional league. Hollandia proposed that boarded play should be a part of all divisions and levels. The general consensus was that there wasn't enough understanding of the boarded game or how individuals would react to it to make that decision.

The initial decision was that division 3 at the U14 and U16 levels would be changed to a boarded league for developmental reasons as it offers faster play with fewer stoppages for players that have comparably less physical endurance and ball control. Shortly after registration began a decision was made to change the full boarded format to an interlocked format – offering 5 boarded games and 15 turf games.

## Hollandia's Perspective

Retaining players as they age through the system is of primary concern to Hollandia. From a player perspective, we want to encourage enjoyment and lifelong participation in the sport. From a club perspective, it becomes more difficult to make teams in all divisions if players decide not to return. At the same time, we want to assist all players to grow as players and offer a variety of developmental opportunities to our players.

Hollandia believes that a mix of boarded and non-boarded play for all age groups at all levels of development would be the best scenario in the long term. Boarded soccer offers a unique environment that is high energy as the ball is never out of play. This speeds up the game considerably compared to other formats and requires quick-thinking and excellent teamwork from the players, leading to a more entertaining game.

As the Indoor 2016-2017 season is drawing to a close and preparations are beginning for planning indoor 2017-2018, Hollandia wanted to return to our members that have been most impacted by this change to determine their perspective on the changes. In order to better understand the impact of the boarded league on our players' enjoyment of the game we conducted a survey with our members on U14 or U16 teams between January 26<sup>th</sup> and February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

Parents, coaches and managers were asked a variety of categorical questions to determine their overall enjoyment and satisfaction with the current boarded offerings, as well as open ended questions to solicit advice and guidance on areas to take into consideration for future planning.

## What do the Numbers Say?

Hollandia has 5 teams playing in division 3 during the indoor 2016-2017 season. There 84 individual players registered in 4 U14 and 3 U16 division 3 teams, broken down as:

Division	Gender	Number of Players
U14	Boys	23
U14	Girls	23
U16	Boys	24
U16	Girls	14

There is a large non-response bias with this type of surveying as those individuals happy with the products or services have a lower expected return for completing the survey. Those that are very happy or those that are very upset, or those that have other motivations to answer (such as coaches) are more likely to respond.

Thirty people completed the survey representing an overall response rate of 36%. While the responses varied between gender, age group and role, the lowest response rate was in U16 boys (21%), while the highest was at U14 girls (52%). In order to increase comparability of responses, the analysis was undertaken using percentages. This technique did not substantially alter the interpretation of the results.

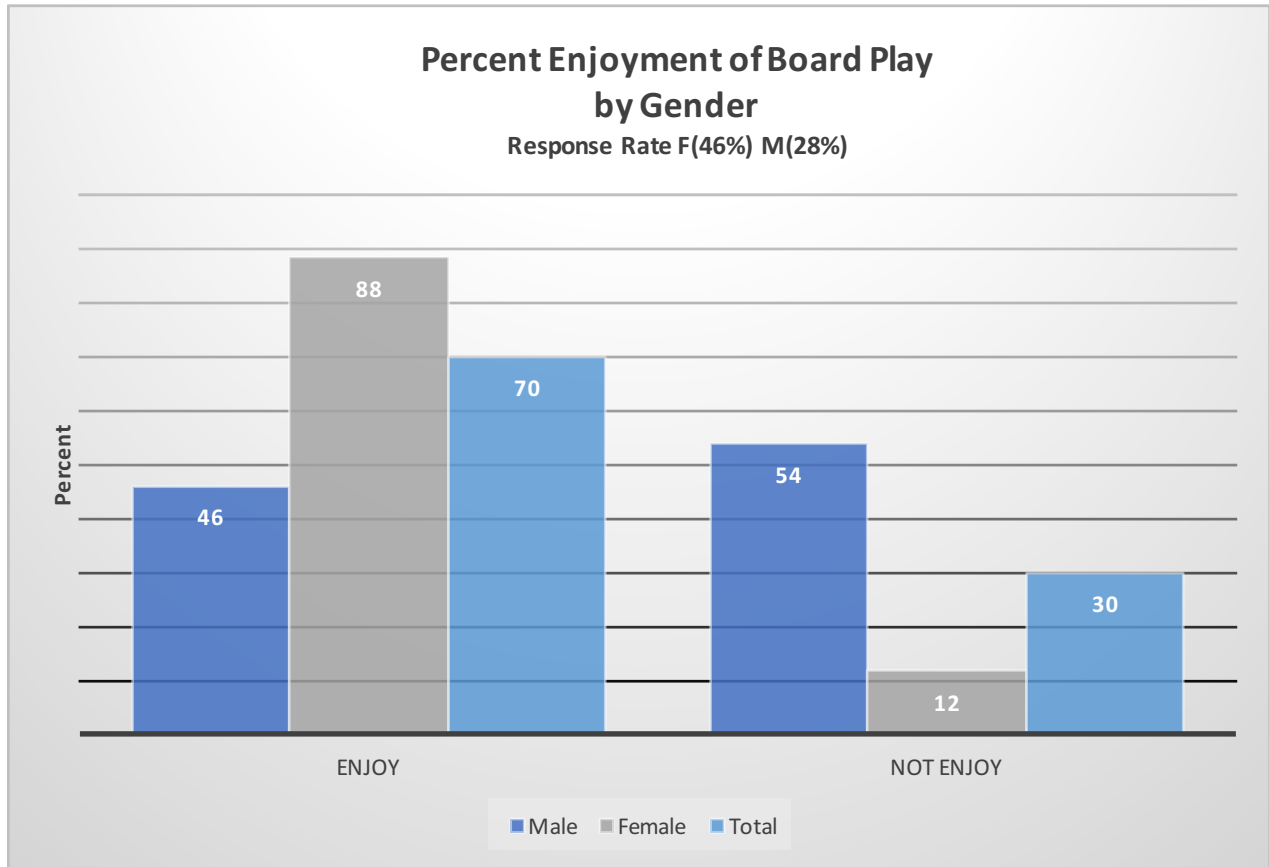
The survey asked questions that:

- Captured basic categories for classification purposes (Gender, division, role);
- Helped gauge enjoyment of playing boarded games as part of regular league play, the way players reacted to boarded games both before and after the game, enjoyment of changing game formats and locations throughout the season.
- Recommendations about the role of boarded play, the schedule and format of game play
- Considerations to consider to increase enjoyment of the sport while increasing development opportunities.

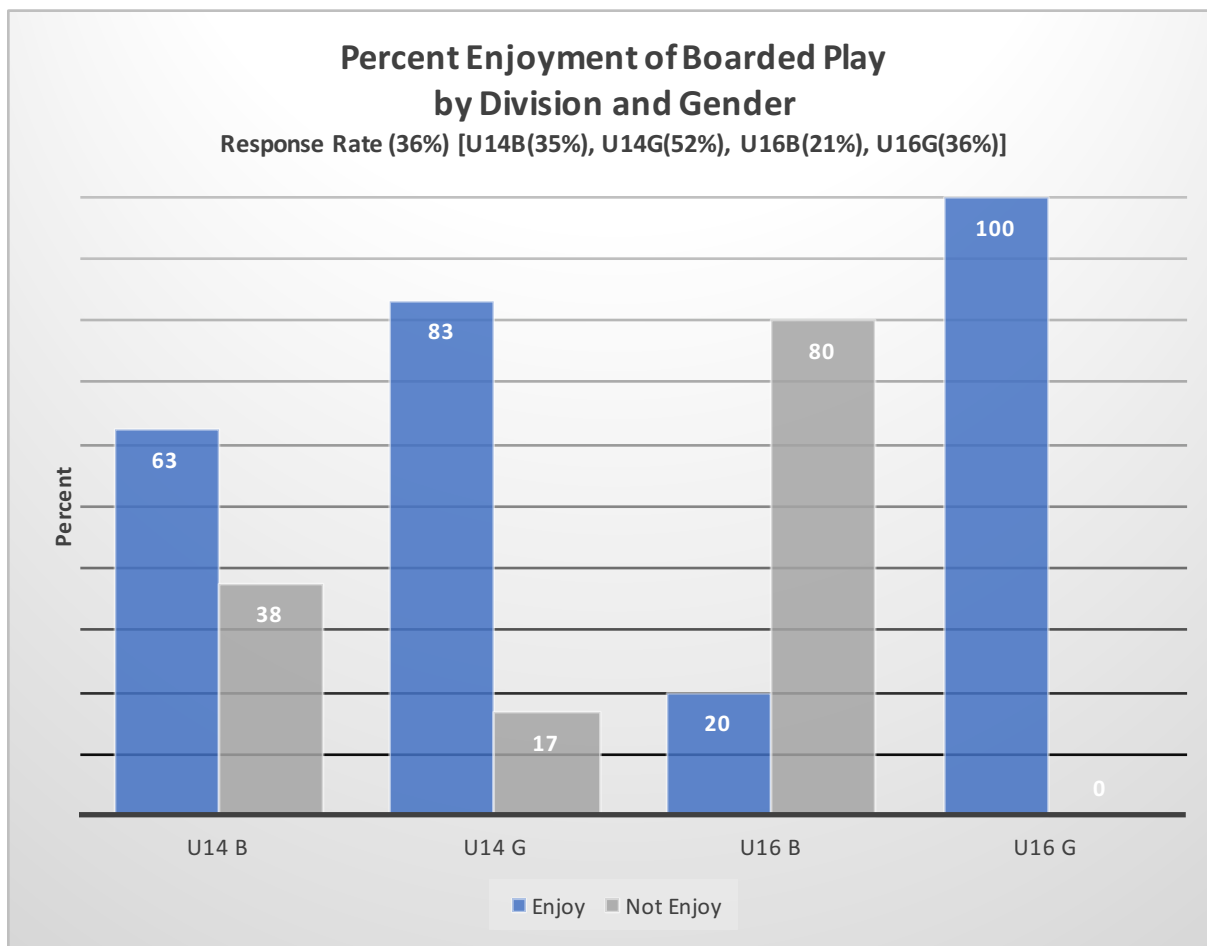
When analyzing the results, we looked for broad patterns in peoples' experiences and comments to make recommendations for 2017-2018 indoor. While our technical committee makes recommendations based on best practices for player development, it is extremely important for us to ensure our recommendations resonate with what our members are telling us.

## Enjoyment of Boarded Play

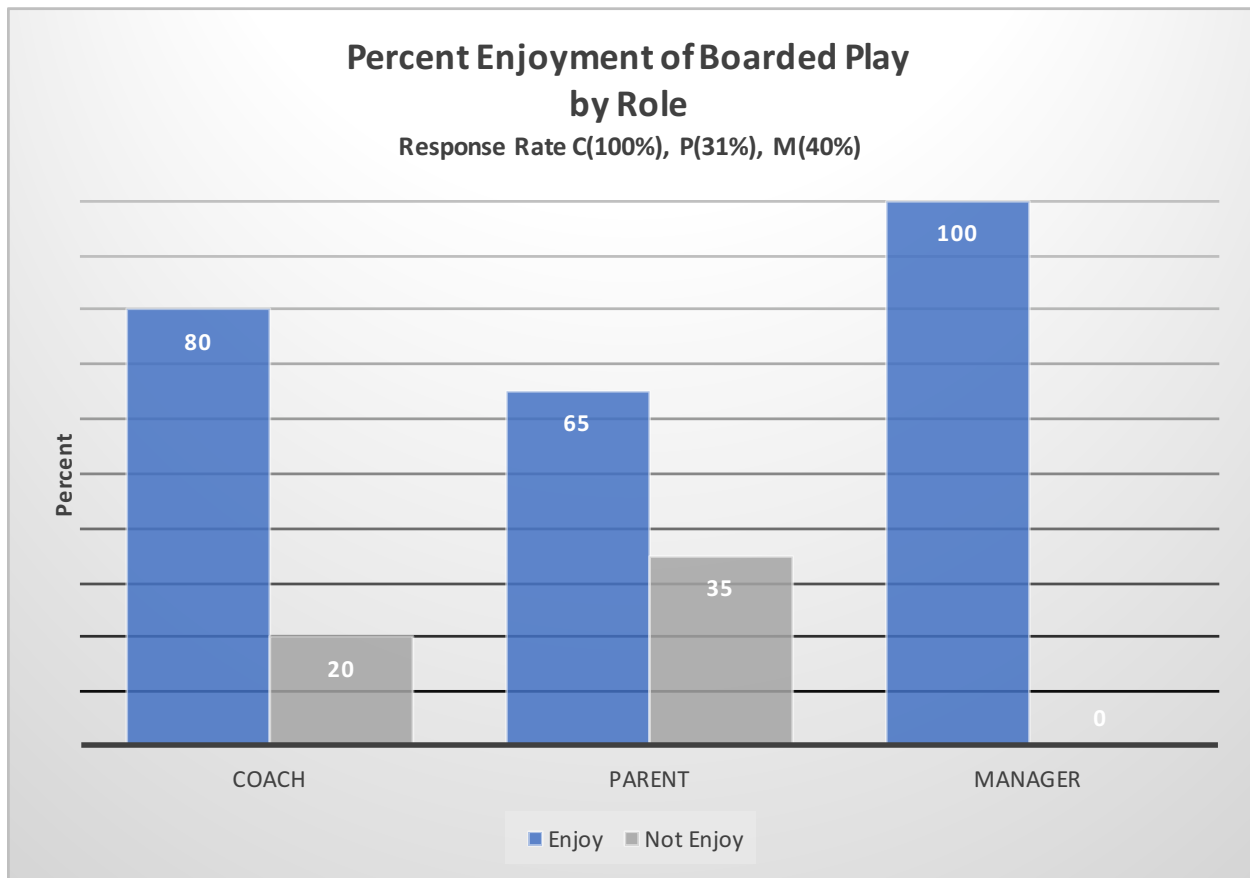
Overall, 70% of respondents enjoyed seeing boarded play introduced as a part of regular league play. This provides a strong rationale to continue with boarded play. However, we see a large difference between the male and female experience. While 88% of females enjoyed the boarded game as a part of their regular season, only 46% of males did. It should be noted that males had a much lower response rate than did females.



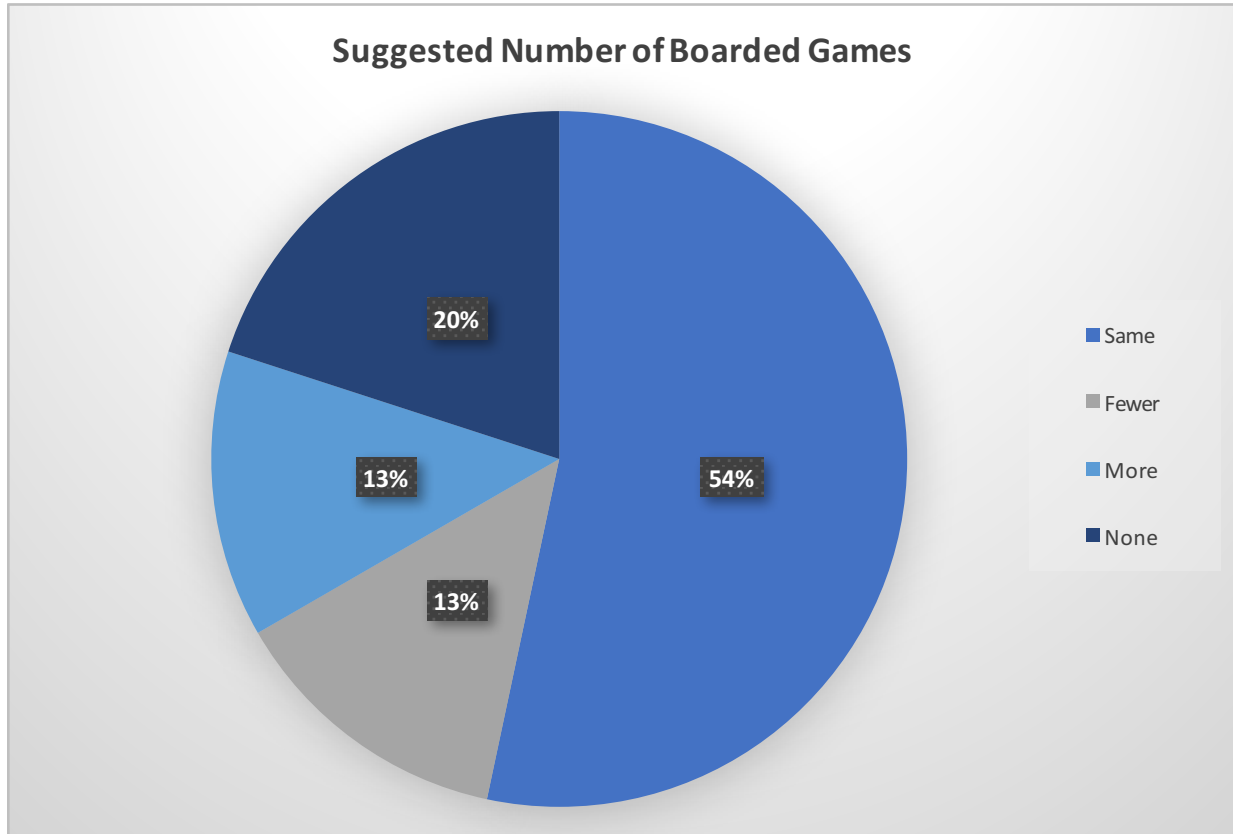
Further analysis indicated that the gendered response is even more apparent at U16. U16B had a high level of dissatisfaction (80%) with the boarded games being incorporated into regular league games. This effect is moderated at the U14 level with only 38% being dissatisfied. The vast difference in these results indicate that further data collection with the U16B age group would be required to determine if this is indicative of the general experience, or if it has been impacted by the low response rate in this group.



The role of the respondent impacts the enjoyment of the boarded game as well. While coaches and managers were overall very supportive (80% and 100% respectively) respondents who had no other role were more evenly split. 65% of parents felt boarded play was enjoyed as a part of league play, compared to 70% overall. While the responses of coaches and managers did increase the results, these individuals are all also parents of players on these teams. It was important for us to determine the impact role had on perception of the boarded experience.



Finally, we asked people whether they would like to see changes in the way league play is scheduled with consideration to the boarded game format. 74% of respondents suggested they would like to see the same or an increased number of boarded games incorporated as a regular part of league play.



## What Else Did We Hear?

While the numbers tell us an important part of the story, they are only part of the story. More importantly, we need to understand *why* people felt as they did. While there was an overall enjoyment of the format, addressing the reasons people did not enjoy the format may create better experiences for our players, meaning better development and better retention. A note about location – reflective of the geographic realities of our zone, no matter which soccer centre we are at, we are closer to home for some of our players and further for others.

## What did respondents like?

1. Game Style - "It is a different game than turf. It is quicker paced and allows a different kind of player development that they don't get on turf." Respondents liked the speed of the play, the way the game keeps flowing, and the way their players touch the ball more. There were many comments that the players increased their strategic play as the season went on. As well there were many comments from individuals that grew up

playing boarded soccer and were excited to see their children getting the opportunity to enjoy this format.

2. Wider Skill Development – “Its good to play both, different techniques and they’re learning better control.” Respondents enjoyed that players had to make decisions quickly, couldn’t hold onto the ball for as long, and had to think about different game formats in different ways.

#### What did respondents NOT like?

1. Disparity – “Why does under 14 div 3 play ¼ turf and div 2 and premier get ½ field turf. The perception looks bad.” The strongest complaint is that division 3 players feel discriminated against. Respondents would like to see the boarded play in all leagues. There was a sense that division 3 were moved to boarded to make room for premier teams to have more turf time at the other soccer centre.
2. Game Style – “Boarded soccer is not real soccer, and soccer should be played on turf or grass.” There were feelings that it turned the game into a ‘kick and chase’ style of play, rather than controlled play. There were comments about the field size, noting that large players find ¼ field on either surface small and that division 3 players don’t have as much body control.
3. Safety – “Boarded play is rougher and dangerous”. Respondents were generally concerned with the potential dangers of the game with players being knocked into the boards and refs not being diligent enough around the boards.
4. Roster Sizes – with the varied game formats, 9v9 on half field, and 6v6 on boarded sometimes the bench felt too big and sometimes it was too small. This is linked with coach ability to change the line, the length of player shifts. This comment is almost always linked with a preference for larger field play; “It should have been on half field turf for the entire season.”

#### What were the suggestions for us to do better?

1. Education – “Spend a bit of extra time making sure the players and parents know the rule differences.” Some respondents felt that the players and coaches needed to better understand the subtleties of the different game formats to get the most out of the season – especially as they are playing boarded, ¼ field turf, and ½ field turf. There were comments that the coaches have to do extra work to ensure players are prepared for, and get the most out of, this opportunity.
2. Equity – “It should have been ALL divisions played boarded, not just Div 3. Do not discriminate!” Players on division 3 teams don’t want to be treated differently. They would like the same opportunities to play on the larger field sizes at indoor, especially as they play on that size of field at outdoor. Respondents felt if boarded play increased skills at one division, it would work to increase skills at all divisions.
3. Scheduling – There is a strong consensus that the players do not want to play all games boarded. They also do not want to play all games on ¼ fields. There were comments about us improving the schedule to ensure that practice surfaces align with the game



surface the players will be playing on that week, and about distributing the games on various surfaces and sizes of fields throughout the season.

4. Safety – “The rules need to be very strict (good refs) so there is less chance of injury.” There were several suggestions that players were explicitly taught how to play closer to the boards and ways to avoid injury for players who have not experienced boarded play in the past.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Generally, there is support to continue interlocking boarded play with turf play. However, strong consideration needs to be taken of the U16 boys due to the very high percent of non-enjoyment at that age group. Additionally, there were some very real concerns from respondents that need to be addressed. One thing is abundantly clear. We need to do a better job of ensuring our division 3 players know they are valued, and that when their soccer experience is designed it is done with technical and player development in mind – not that they are being given the leftovers after the other divisions have been taken care of.

Hollandia’s board will be reviewing and discussing the results of this survey, and we will be having conversations at the city level. We believe that wider surveying should be done among the other impacted players in the other zones to verify the results of our survey.

### Initial Recommendations

- Keep the general ratio of boarded to turf games at 1:3
- Offer all U14 and U16 teams the chance to play on ½ field turf
- Develop or distribute better developmentally appropriate educational materials to parents and coaches illuminating strategic and rule differences between boarded play, ¼ field turf play, and ½ field turf play
- Ensure refs are well prepared to ref the boarded format, and that rules are enforced strictly for player safety.
- Continue to promote a love of boarded play among all players by interlocking boarded play into all division’s league schedules.