

Coaches Objectives and Code of Conduct

Please read, sign and turn in to get your team roster.

Objective: Build character, decision making abilities, social skills, leadership, and soccer skills through the physical activity of soccer.

I agree to conduct myself, educate my parents, and instruct my players according to these principles and guidelines (note that some repeat for added emphasis):

1. I will fully support the following by demonstrating supporting behaviors with my actions, educating my player's parents, and instructing my players actions.
 - a. **Enthusiastically support and practice** the "*Everyone Plays,*" "*Good Sportsmanship*" and "*Positive Coaching*" philosophies described below.
 1. **EVERYONE PLAYS** - We want kids to play soccer - so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.
 2. **POSITIVE COACHING** - We ask our coaches to make the extra effort to understand and offer positive help to our players, rather than use negative criticism. This approach builds a positive team spirit.
 3. **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP** - We want to create a positive environment based upon mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude. All of our programs are designed to instill good sportsmanship in our kids and our volunteers.
 - b. **Be reasonable** in your demands on a young player's time, energy, enthusiasm and performance on the field.
 - c. **Impress** on your players that they must abide by the Laws of the Game at all times as described in this document on subsequent pages for your team's age group.
 - d. **Develop team respect** for the ability of opponents and for the judgement of referees and opposing coaches.
 - e. **Ensure that** your players' soccer experience is one of fun and enjoyment (winning is only part of it). Players should never be yelled at or ridiculed for making mistakes or losing a game.
 - f. **Set a good example** and be generous with your praise when it is deserved. Children need a coach they can respect.
 - g. **Keep informed** of sound principles of coaching, growth and child development.
 - h. **Check your equipment** and playing facilities. The should meet safety standards and be appropriate for the age and ability of your players.
 - i. **Follow the advice** of a physician when determining when an injured child is ready to play again.
2. I will not intimidate players, referees, or other coaches. I will not use foul language. I will not criticize players, coaches, or referees. I will discuss any issues with the affected individual in private. I will start each conversation with what the individual does well before talking about areas I'm displeased about.
3. I recognize this is a recreational league. Therefore, I will not keep game scores or league standings. I will not promote my team's success over any others at any time.
4. I will promote fun, enthusiasm, social interaction, decision making, team work, and soccer skills.
5. I will fully support referees by:
 - a. Defending his or her calls with players, parents, and other coaches.
 - b. Provide feedback, both positive and negative, to the referee commissioner as appropriate.
 - c. I understand many of the referees are developing their skills too. I will support their development in a positive constructive manner.

6. I understand that soccer is different from other sports in that it is a “players game.” It is designed so the coach has little to no influence during the game. I will not try to change this design of the game by excessively yelling instructions to my players or making excessive substitutions. I will stay generally quite, reserved, and make notes on skills to work on at practice based upon my observation of the players during the game.
7. I will focus on the positive aspect of each player before, during, and after practice and games. I will ask players and parents to do the same.
8. I will play each player on my team at least 50% of each and every game. I will not play players additional time until everyone has had a chance to play.
9. I will bring to the attention of FCYSA Board, parents, players, or coaches that violate these principles.
10. I will educate my parents and players on their respective code of conduct contained in this document.
11. I will follow the guidelines for my age division included in this coaches information booklet.
12. I recognize the following about my players and will conduct games and practices to make it the most fun for the children while simultaneously teaching soccer skills.
 - a. **Children** must be treated as children, not as mini-adults.
 - b. **Children** are essentially self-oriented and only relate naturally to a friend or two, not to groups of six or more.
 - c. **Children** cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best with frequent rest periods.
 - d. **Children** have a limited span of attention, so frequent activity changes are necessary.
 - e. **Children** focus best when learning activities are fun.
 - f. **Children** hate standing in lines. Maximize the number of touches on the ball during practice. Assure the amount of time conducting an activity is at least twice the time waiting to conduct the activity.
13. I will not reschedule games with other coaches, players, or parents, until I have gained approval from the Referee Commissioner or her desingnee.
14. I understand that the FCYSA Board of Directors has the right and obligation to replace me as a coach if I violate any of these policies.
15. I have not been convicted of any child-related offenses.

Printed Name

Signed

Dated

Coaches Information Booklet

Floyd County Youth Soccer Association

March 22, 2001

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Letter To The Coaches

Floyd County Youth Soccer Association League Information for Coaches

3/21/01

This document contains information pertaining to FCYSA league rules for Recreational Soccer.

PLAYERS: Team player assignments are made at the beginning of the season and rosters distributed to coaches. Do not add players to your roster without contacting the Registrar and receiving approval.

GAMES: Schedules will be distributed to the coaches by age division as soon as they are finalized. These will sometimes include games with Clark and Harrison County teams. The Referee Commissioner must be notified of, and approve, any changes to the game schedule.

EQUIPMENT: There is a storage shed for all field equipment at the end of the first drive on the right coming into Community Park. The shed is locked with a combination lock. If you need the combination, please contact one of the FCYSA board members. There are large green plastic storage cans marked for each field (except Under-6). These must be taken to the appropriate field for each game, then stored there after the last game of the day. These cans contain nets, stakes, velcro, hammers, and game balls. Please return the game balls to the can after each game. There is also a clipboard in each can with a Match Report for that field. These are for the referees assigned to the game, but can also be used for coach's comments. For Under-6 games, there are temporary goals stored outside the shed. Two are needed for each game. **If the nets, goals, and equipment are not returned after the last game on a field (all age levels), both coaches of that game will be called to return to the park immediately to store the equipment properly.**

FIELDS: The team with the first game of the day at each field puts up the nets (or goals, for Under-6). The team with the last game of the day takes them down and puts the can (goals) back in the shed. Coaches can refer to the Match Reports on the clipboard for games on the field for that day. Be sure to use the correct equipment can labeled for the age division. The Under-10 field is the first field on the right coming into Community Park. The Under-8 field #1 is under the power lines on the right (the third field on the right), Under-8 field #2 is in front of the first playground on the right. The Under-6 fields are set up in between the Under-10 and Under-8 #2 with temporary goals. The Under-12 field (used for all games Under-12 and up) is the large field next to the lake. Players and coaches are on one side of the field, all other spectators are on the opposite side of the field. For the Under-6 games, players and coaches are on the inside of the fields, all others are on the outside.

REFEREES: A referee "team" will be assigned to each match, Under-8 and up, which consists of a center referee and two linesmen (which may also be referred to as assistant referees). An Under-6 game may have one center referee. An Under-5 game will not have a referee assigned, as this is an instructional age group. Assignments are posted on the door of the shed each weekend.

DRESS: All players for a team must wear the same color jersey, except for the goalie. The goalie shirt must be a different color than either team on the field. The team shirt may be worn on the outside of any other clothing in cold weather. Players must wear shorts (or long pants in inclement weather), with the jersey tucked in. Shin guards must be worn, with socks that completely cover the shin guards. Players may wear tennis shoes or soccer cleats - no football cleats or baseball cleats unless the toe cleat has been removed. **Jewelry, watches, or earrings may not be worn by any player.** The referees will enforce this.

COACHES: There is a coach assigned to each team. An assistant coach may also be assigned, if there was a volunteer, or a coach may appoint an assistant coach. There must be one coach, or designated adult, at each game with the team. There may be only two coaches/adults on the player side of the field. In the Under-6 age division, one coach may be on the field with the players. For Under-8 age division, an additional coach may be at the goal. The league suggests that each coach find a parent volunteer to act as team manager to assist in distributing information (such as picture envelopes), making refreshment schedules, etc. The coach and team must arrive at the field 15 minutes before the scheduled game time for player and equipment checks.

FORFEITS: A game will be forfeited if any of the following occur in reference to a team:

1. A coach plays an illegal, suspended, or unregistered player.
2. A team fails to have a sufficient number of players at game time. The players must be ready to play within 15 minutes of the scheduled game time.
3. A team fails to have a responsible adult present in place of the coach within 15 minutes of the scheduled game time.
4. There is extreme misconduct of a player, coach, or spectator associated with a team.

Referees may not work a game that has been forfeited.

WEATHER/FIELD CONDITIONS: The center referee has the authority to cancel, suspend, or postpone a game due to unacceptable weather or field conditions which create unsafe playing conditions. The following notes apply to games during inclement weather/field conditions:

1. Games are played in the rain, even a hard rain. Games are only stopped for lightning. If there is lightning, the center referee will immediately move the players to the nearest shelter house, or instruct them to go to their cars. The game will be delayed for up to 15 minutes while the weather conditions are assessed. If, after 15 minutes, there is still lightning in the area, the game will be terminated. If 50% or more of the game was completed, the game is considered complete. If less than 50% has been completed, the game will be rescheduled in its entirety. Either coach may contact the Referee Commissioner to reschedule the game.
2. If the game cannot be completed due to darkness or an approaching storm, the center referee can suggest to the coaches that the playing time for the halves/quarters be shortened to provide equal amounts of playing time.
3. If the field condition is unsafe to play on or could cause injury to the players, the center referee can ask to have the game rescheduled with the approval of the Referee Commissioner and the President of the league.
4. Coaches may not cancel a game because of weather conditions.

INJURIES: In the event of an injury during a game, the center referee will assess the situation and determine whether to stop or continue play. Once play is stopped, the extent of the injury must be determined. If needed, the coach will be summoned onto the field. IF A PLAYER CANNOT WALK OFF THE FIELD ON HIS/HER OWN, DO NOT CARRY THE PLAYER OFF THE FIELD. NOTIFY THE PARENT, AND INFORM THE PARENT THAT AN AMBULANCE WILL BE CALLED, AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE. CONTACT EMERGENCY SERVICES.

GAME INFORMATION: The following information is printed on the back of the clipboards assigned to each field and will be followed:

| Age Division | # of Players | Minimum Number | Ball Size | Game Time | Break(s) Minutes | Field Size | Center Referee | Sideline Referee |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| U-6 | 3 v 3 | | #3 | 4@8 min | 2-5-2 | 25Y x 20Y | Club Linesman | None |
| U-8 | 6 v 6 | 5 | #3 | 4@12 min | 2-5-2 | 50Y x 30Y | USSF | Club Linesman |
| U-9,10 | 8 v 8 | 6 | #4 | 2@25 min | 5 | 70Y x 50Y | USSF | Club Linesman |
| U-11,12 | 11 v 11 | 7 | #4 | 2@30 min | 5 | 110Y x 55Y | USSF | Club Linesman |
| U-13,14 | 11 v 11 | 7 | #5 | 2@35 min | 5 | 110Y x 55Y | USSF | USSF |
| U-15,16 | 11 v 11 | 7 | #5 | 2@40 min | 5 | 110Y x 55Y | USSF | USSF |
| U-17,18 | 11 v 11 | 7 | #5 | 2@45 min | 5 | 110Y x 55Y | USSF | USSF |

SUBSTITUTIONS: Player substitutions are made at half-time, during goal kicks (either team), on throw-ins for the team with possession, or in the case of injury. Substitutes must be at the center flag before they can go into the game. The center referee will signal for them to come onto the field.

DIRECT/INDIRECT KICKS: In the Under-8 age division, there are no direct or penalty kicks. All kicks in this age group are indirect. For age divisions above this, the center referee will signal the type of kick based on the call.

THROW-INS: In the Under-6 age division, there are no throw-ins unless the coach has worked with the teams and they are ready to try later on in the season. For this age, the ball will be kicked in from where it left the field. For all older age divisions, the throw-in will be taken from where the ball left the field. The center referee will indicate this. For a correct throw-in, the player must have both hands on the ball, take it straight back behind the head, and keep both feet on the ground. In the Under-8 age division, players will be allowed a second chance to take a throw-in correctly. If not taken correctly (in any age group – second chance in U-8), the throw-in will go to the other team.

OFFSIDES: The offside position is when a player is nearer to his/her opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second to last opponent. A player is not offside on his/her own half of the field. **Being in an offside position is not an offense in itself.** However, if a player in an offside position interferes with play, interferes with an opponent, or gains an advantage by being in that position, at the moment the ball touches or is played by a teammate, an indirect kick is awarded to the opposing team. There is no offside offense if a player receives the ball directly from a goal kick, throw-in, or corner kick. Offsides will not be called in the Under-8 age division, however, if a player continuously "hangs-out" at the opponent's goal, this will be considered unsporting conduct.

SLIDE TACKLE: New Rule: Slide tackling will not be allowed at any age level in the recreational league. If a player performs a slide tackle, they will first receive a warning by the referee. If a player performs a slide tackle a second time, the referee will stop play

and award an indirect free kick to the opponent. Another slide tackle by the same player will result in that player being sent out of the game. The coach may substitute for that player only at the next regular substitution opportunity.

WEBSITE: An internet website has been established to list current games schedules and league information. The site is **www.otherside.com/dhuff/**. Please check this often.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please call the **Soccer Hotline** at **923-0100**.

Coaches Objectives and Code of Conduct

Objective: Build character, decision making abilities, social skills, leadership, and soccer skills through the physical activity of soccer.

I agree to conduct myself, educate my parents, and instruct my players according to these principles and guidelines (note that some repeat for added emphasis):

1. I will fully support the following by demonstrating supporting behaviors with my actions, educating my player's parents, and instructing my players actions.
 - a. **Enthusiastically support and practice** the *"Everyone Plays," "Good Sportsmanship" and "Positive Coaching"* philosophies described below.
 1. **EVERYONE PLAYS** - We want kids to play soccer - so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.
 2. **POSITIVE COACHING** - We ask our coaches to make the extra effort to understand and offer positive help to our players, rather than use negative criticism. This approach builds a positive team spirit.
 3. **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP** - We want to create a positive environment based upon mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude. All of our programs are designed to instill good sportsmanship in our kids and our volunteers.
 - b. **Be reasonable** in your demands on a young player's time, energy, enthusiasm and performance on the field.
 - c. **Impress** on your players that they must abide by the Laws of the Game at all times as described in this document on subsequent pages for your team's age group.
 - d. **Develop team respect** for the ability of opponents and for the judgement of referees and opposing coaches.
 - e. **Ensure that** your players' soccer experience is one of fun and enjoyment (winning is only part of it). Players should never be yelled at or ridiculed for making mistakes or losing a game.
 - f. **Set a good example** and be generous with your praise when it is deserved. Children need a coach they can respect.
 - g. **Keep informed** of sound principles of coaching, growth and child development.
 - h. **Check your equipment** and playing facilities. They should meet safety standards and be appropriate for the age and ability of your players.
 - i. **Follow the advice** of a physician when determining when an injured child is ready to play again.
2. I will not intimidate players, referees, or other coaches. I will not use foul language. I will not criticize players, coaches, or referees. I will discuss any issues with the affected individual in private. I will start each conversation with what the individual does well before talking about areas I'm displeased about.
3. I recognize this is a recreational league. Therefore, I will not keep game scores or league standings. I will not promote my team's success over any others at any time.
4. I will promote fun, enthusiasm, social interaction, decision making, team work, and soccer skills.
5. I will fully support referees by:
 - a. Defending his or her calls with players, parents, and other coaches.
 - b. Provide feedback, both positive and negative, to the referee commissioner as appropriate.
 - c. I understand many of the referees are developing their skills too. I will support their development in a positive constructive manner.
6. I understand that soccer is different from other sports in that it is a "players game." It is designed so the coach has little to no influence during the game. I will not try to change this design of the game by excessively yelling instructions to my players or making excessive substitutions. I will stay generally quite, reserved, and make notes on skills to work on at practice based upon my observation of the players during the game.

7. I will focus on the positive aspect of each player before, during, and after practice and games. I will ask players and parents to do the same.
8. I will play each player on my team at least 50% of each and every game. I will not play players additional time until everyone has had a chance to play.
9. I will bring to the attention of FCYSA Board, parents, players, or coaches that violate these principles.
10. I will educate my parents and players on their respective code of conduct contained in this document.
11. I will follow the guidelines for my age division included in this coaches information booklet.
12. I recognize the following about my players and will conduct games and practices to make it the most fun for the children while simultaneously teaching soccer skills.
 - a. **Children** must be treated as children, not as mini-adults.
 - b. **Children** are essentially self-oriented and only relate naturally to a friend or two, not to groups of six or more.
 - c. **Children** cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best with frequent rest periods.
 - d. **Children** have a limited span of attention, so frequent activity changes are necessary.
 - e. **Children** focus best when learning activities are fun.
 - f. **Children** hate standing in lines. Maximize the number of touches on the ball during practice. Assure the amount of time conducting an activity is at least twice the time waiting to conduct the activity.
13. I will not reschedule games with other coaches, players, or parents, until I have gained approval from the Referee Commissioner or her desingnee.
14. I understand that the FCYSA Board of Directors has the right and obligation to replace me as a coach if I violate any of these policies.
15. I have not been convicted of any child-related offenses.

Printed Name

Signed

Dated

FCYSA SHORT-SIDED U5&U6 *Guidelines*

A. THE FIELD

1. **Dimensions:** Maximum 25 yards long and 20 yards wide (25 yds x 20 yds)
2. **Markings:** Distinctive lines not required. Field can be marked using 10 flat pro-cones and four regular cones:
3. **Goals:** Maximum 4 feet high and 6 feet wide (4' x 6')

B. THE BALL

- Size three (3)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time from each team: three (3); **no goalkeepers**
2. Maximum number of players on roster: six (6)
3. Substitutions: Between periods and at halftime
4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player and 75% when possible. No one should play two periods until everyone has played a period.

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear:* Tennis shoes or soccer shoes (No toe cleat allowed)
- *Shinguards:* MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. FCYSA does not use referees for this division unless it's solely for the referee's experience and development. If a referee is provided by the Referee Commissioner then they could be either a:
 - a. registered referee
 - b. youth referee
 - c. coach
 - d. parent
2. Referees should emphasize:
 - a. **fun**
 - b. **fairness**
 - c. **safety**
 - d. **learning**

NOTE: Referees should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and help players with instructions.

F. DURATION OF GAME:

1. U5: Four 5 minutes; U6: Four eight-minute periods
2. Halftime break of five to ten minutes, Other quarter breaks of two minutes.

G. THE START OF PLAY:

The game should be started with a free kick in the middle of the field. The coaches should determine which team starts the game and the opposing team should start the second half. The referee will ensure that opponents are at least five (5) yards from the spot of the free kick

H. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY:

1. When the whole ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air, it should be thrown in by a player of the opposite team from where the ball crossed the line.
2. When the whole ball passes over the goal line (not into the goal), it should be kicked into play by a player of the opposing team from where the ball crossed the line.

I. METHOD OF SCORING

- No change from regular play. Score not kept.

J. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

1. Direct free kick for all fouls, with the opponents five yards away
2. Referee should explain ALL infractions

1. **Standings are not recorded**
2. **Game scores are not recorded**
3. **Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game**
4. **IF awards are given all players receive participation awards**
5. **No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game**
6. **Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time**
7. **Spectators are not allowed behind either goal or within three (3) yards outside the touchline**
8. **Information on pages 3 – 5 of this document applies in the event of conflicting information.**

FCYSA SHORT-SIDED U-8 Guidelines

A. THE FIELD

1. **Dimensions:** Maximum 50 yards long by 30 yards wide (50 yds x 30 yards)
2. **Markings:** Distinctive lines recommended.
 - a. Halfway line the width of the field, marked equidistant between the goal lines
 - b. Center circle with a six yard radius in the center of the field
 - c. Corner arcs with a one yard radius at each corner of the field
 - d. Goal area in front of each goal measuring six yards by 12 yards (6 yds x 12 yds)
3. **Goals:** Maximum 6 feet high by 6 yards wide (6 ft x 6 yds)

B. THE BALL

- Size three (3)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time from each team: Six (6); one of whom may be a goalkeeper; minimum of 5 is required.
2. Maximum number of players on roster: twelve (12)
3. Substitutions: Between periods and at halftime
4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player, if possible. No one should play two periods until everyone has played a period.
5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear:* Tennis shoes or soccer shoes (No shoes with a toe cleat are allowed)
- *Shinguards:* MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 - a. registered referee
 - b. youth referee
 - c. coach
2. Referees should emphasize:
 - a. **fun**
 - b. **fairness**
 - c. **safety**
 - d. **learning**

NOTE: Referees should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and help players with instructions.

Referee decisions are final and must not be questioned by coaches

1. **Standings are not recorded**
2. **Game scores are not recorded**
3. **Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game**
4. **If awards are given then all players receive participation awards**
5. **No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game**
6. **Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time**
7. **A single coach may be behind their goal during the game for the sole purpose of coaching the goalie. Coaching other players on the field, from behind the goal, may mean this privilege is revoked for the duration of the game, at the sole discretion of the referee.**
8. **Spectators, parents, and non-playing players are not allowed behind either goal or within three (3) yards outside the touchline**
9. **Information on pages 3 – 5 of this document applies in the event of conflicting information**

F. ASSISTANT REFEREES (Linesmen)

- Parents may be used

G. DURATION OF GAME:

1. Four 12-minute periods: two min between quarters.
2. Halftime break of five minutes

H. THE START OF PLAY:

No change from regular play except that opponents must be six (6) yards from the center mark while kick-off is in progress.

I. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY:

No change from regular play

J. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play

K. OFFSIDE

There should be no offside called

L. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

No change from regular play except:

1. Direct free kick for all fouls, with the opponents six (6) yards away
2. Referees will work cooperatively with the coaches and eliminate the need for cautions and send-offs. Do not show yellow or red cards.

M. FREE KICKS

1. All kicks are direct free kicks
2. Free kicks awarded the attacking team inside the defending team's goal area should be taken from the nearest point on the goal area line in front of the goal.

N. PENALTY KICKS

No penalty kicks

O. THROW-IN

A second throw-in should be allowed if the player commits a foul on the initial attempt. The referee should explain the proper method before allowing the player to re-throw.

P. GOAL KICK

1. May be taken from any point inside the goal area
2. Opponents must be six (6) yards away from ball

Q. CORNER KICK

No change from regular play, except that opponents must be eight (8) yards from the ball

FCYSA SHORT-SIDED U-10 *Guidelines*

A. THE FIELD

1. **Dimensions:** Maximum 70 yards long by 50 yards wide (70 yds x 50 yards)
2. **Markings:** Distinctive lines recommended.
 - a. Halfway line the width of the field, marked equidistant between the goal lines
 - b. Center circle with a eight (8) yard radius in the center of the field
 - c. Corner arcs with a one (1) yard radius at each corner of the field
 - d. Goal area in front of each goal measuring six (6) yards by 15 yards (6 yds x 15 yds)
 - e. Penalty area in front of each goal measuring 14 yards by 36 yards (14 yds x 36 yds)
 - f. Penalty mark 10 yards from the goal line
 - g. Penalty arc extending in an eight (8) yard radius from the penalty mark
3. **Goals:** Maximum 7 feet high by 7 yards wide (7 ft x 7yds)

B. THE BALL

- Size four (4)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time from each team: eight (8); one of whom may be a goalkeeper; A minimum of 6 is required.
2. Maximum number of players on roster not to exceed 14
3. Substitutions: Between periods and at halftime
4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player, if possible. No one should play two periods until everyone has played a period.
5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear:* Tennis shoes or soccer shoes (No shoes with a toe cleat are allowed.)
- *Shinguards:* MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 - a. registered referee
 - b. trained youth referee
2. Referees should emphasize:
 - a. **fun**
 - b. **fairness**
 - c. **safety**
 - d. **learning**

Referee decisions are final and must not be questioned by coaches

1. Standings are not recorded
2. Game scores are not recorded
3. Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game
4. If awards are given, then all players receive participation awards
5. No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game
6. Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time
7. Parents, coaches, non-playing players, and spectators are prohibited behind either goal.
8. Spectators, coaches, non-playing players, parents are not allowed behind either goal or within three (3) yards outside the touchline.
9. Information on pages 3 – 5 of this document applies in the event of conflicting information

F. ASSISTANT REFEREES (Linesmen)

- Parents may be used

G. DURATION OF GAME:

1. Two 25-minute periods
2. Halftime break of five minutes

H. THE START OF PLAY:

No change from regular play except that opponents must be eight (8) yards from the center mark while kick-off is in progress.

I. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY:

No change from regular play

J. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play

K. OFFSIDE

No change from regular play

L. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

1. No change from regular play
2. Referees will work cooperatively with the coaches and eliminate the need for cautions and send-offs. Do not show yellow or red cards

M. FREE KICKS

No change from regular play except that opponents must retreat eight (8) yards from the ball during opponents' free kicks

N. PENALTY KICKS

No change from regular play except that opponents must be outside the penalty area and eight (8) yards from the ball before a kick is allowed

O. THROW-IN

No change from regular play (No re-throws as done in U8)

P. GOAL KICK

No change from regular play

Q. CORNER KICK

No change from regular play, except that opponents must be eight (8) yards from the ball

FCYSA U-12 Guidelines

A. THE FIELD

1. **Dimensions:** Maximum 110 yards long by 55 yards wide (110 yds x 55 yds)
2. **Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than five (5) inches wide
 - a. Halfway line the width of the field, marked equidistant between the goal lines
 - b. Center circle with a 10 yard radius in the center of the field
 - c. Corner arcs with a one (1) yard radius at each corner of the field
 - d. Goal area: Six (6) yards from each goalpost and six (6) yards into the field of play joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line
 - e. Penalty area: 18 yards into the field of play, joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line
3. **Goals:** Maximum 8 feet high by 8 yards wide (8 ft x 8yds)

B. THE BALL

- Size four (4)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. No change from regular play: Eleven (11) on the field at any one time from each team. Minimum of 7.
2. Maximum number of players on roster not to exceed 18
3. Substitutions - no change from regular play - From midfield at throw-in and goal kicks.
4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player. (75% highly recommended)
5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- **Footwear:** Tennis shoes or soccer shoes (Shoes with a toe cleat are not allowed)
- **Shinguards:** MANDATORY for both practices and games

1. Parents, coaches, non-playing players, and spectators to be located not less than three (3) yards outside the touch-line.
2. Parents, coaches, non-playing players, and spectators are prohibited behind either goal.
3. Standings are not recorded or posted.
4. Game scores are not recorded or posted.
5. Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game
6. If awards are given all players receive participation awards
7. No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game
8. Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time
9. Information on pages 3 – 5 of this document applies in the event of conflicting information

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 - a. registered referee
 - b. trained youth referee
2. Referees should emphasize:
 - c. fun
 - d. fairness
 - e. safety
 - f. learning

Referee decisions are final on points of fact connected with the game

F. ASSISTANT REFEREES

- Should be trained as assistant referees

G. DURATION OF GAME:

1. Two equal 30-minute periods.
2. Halftime break of five minutes

H. THE START OF PLAY:

No change from regular play

I. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY:

No change from regular play

J. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play

K. OFFSIDE

No change from regular play

L. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

No change from regular play
The referee will work cooperatively with the coaches to eliminate the need for cautions and send-offs

M. FREE KICKS

No change from regular play

N. PENALTY KICKS

No change from regular play

O. THROW-IN

No change from regular play

P. GOAL KICK

No change from regular play

Q. CORNER KICK

No change from regular play

Above U12, teams comply with FIFA Laws of the Game without modification or change except for duration of game shown here. U13,14 – [2@35min](#); U15,16 – [2@40min](#); U17,18 – [2@45min](#) and ball size is #5.

<http://www.soccer.org/resource/shortgam.htm#shortsidedgames>

Coaches Information

SHORT-SIDED SOCCER

WHAT IS SHORT-SIDED SOCCER?

Short-sided soccer is about what is best for young soccer players. It's for AYSO coaches, referees, administrators, spectators, and anyone else concerned with the development of 5 to 12 year old soccer players.

WHY SHORT-SIDED SOCCER?

Because young players need special consideration. Little research or attention has been given this critical period in the development of the under-12 year old players, but most educators agree the early learning experiences are the most important and result in the most retention.

Traditionally, youth soccer programs are viewed from an adult perspective, using the 11-a-side game as a reference. But we need to remember these important points about young players:

- **Children** must be treated as children, not as mini-adults.
- **Children** are essentially self-oriented and only relate naturally to a friend or two, not to groups of six or more.
- **Children** cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best with frequent rest periods.
- **Children** have a limited span of attention, so frequent activity changes are necessary.
- **Children** focus best when learning activities are fun.

Almost 70 percent of AYSO coaches are first-time coaches-parents with little free time. Short-sided soccer is a way to ease adults into coaching as well as to ease children into playing.

Be creative and remember, children play games to have fun. Short-sided games help ensure children have fun and at the same time, maximize their learning opportunities.

ABC's of Soccer

AN INTRODUCTION

The **ABC's of AYSO** is your introduction to AYSO, as well as youth soccer.

Starting with A (**About AYSO**), you'll find what's in store for you and your youngster as members of the finest youth sports organization in the country. You'll also learn about the principles and philosophies that make AYSO so special and how our organization works.

Next, B (**By the Book**), is your primer to the exciting sport of soccer: positions, skills and a few basic laws of the game.

Last, C (**Codes of Conduct**), is where we detail how important Good Sportsmanship is to our organization. From our Player's Code to the Six Pillars of Character to the Parent's Code - AYSO hopes to build more than soccer players, we hope to build outstanding kids!

With AYSO, you'll find a no better environment for your child to develop confidence and good sportsmanship. *And it's our **Volunteers** who make it happen!*

A LITTLE HISTORY

AYSO was founded in 1964 in Torrance, California (near Los Angeles) with about 125 enthusiastic players. Over the past 35 years, we've become a vibrant national organization with nearly 630,000 players and 250,000 volunteers!

HOW WE DO IT

AYSO works because of dedicated volunteers committed to the **Five AYSO Philosophies**. Our phenomenal growth underscores AYSO's commitment to a healthy competitive atmosphere for youth soccer players combined with dedicated volunteers all working towards developing responsible young people.

EVERYONE PLAYS

We want kids to play soccer - so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.

BALANCED TEAMS

We require every region at the start of each season to set up teams as evenly as possible. It's more fun when teams are of equal ability.

OPEN REGISTRATION

Our programs are open to all children ages 5-18 who want to play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only requirements for playing.

POSITIVE COACHING

We train and encourage our coaches to make the extra effort to understand and offer positive help to our players, rather than use negative criticism. This approach builds a positive team spirit.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

We create a positive environment based upon mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude. All of our programs are designed to instill good sportsmanship in our kids and our volunteers.

LET'S PLAY SOCCER

The Game gives you a general overview of what this great game called soccer is all about.

The Team explains the number of players in a game and the positions.

The Skills section defines the basic skills needed during play.

The Officials section helps you understand the difference between a referee and a linesperson.

The Equipment section explains what you need to play.

The Rules section contains a few of the more important seventeen rules - including the Offsides rule.

The Fouls section explains the Penal and Non-penal fouls.

WHAT'S THIS GAME ALL ABOUT?

Soccer is a simple game. All you need is a field, a ball, two teams with the proper equipment and a referee.

The field is approximately the size of a football field for older players and smaller for the younger players.

The game is played in two, timed halves of equal duration. To advance AYSO's "Everyone Plays" commitment, quarter breaks are made within each half to allow for player substitution. The duration of each half is determined by the age of the children playing - longer for older players and shorter for younger players.

Any kid of any size can become a skilled and successful soccer player as physical size is not an important factor. And the best part for them is that due to the nature of the game, ***every kid gets a chance to participate in the action!***

WHO AND HOW MANY AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

A team has a maximum of eleven (11) players on the field at any one time, although a game can be played with as few as seven on each team. In younger age divisions, Regions use short-sided teams which gives players more "touches" on the ball and the ability to learn skills quicker. The kids find it more fun too!

The 4 positions in soccer are:

- **Goalkeeper:** also known as the "keeper," this position is responsible for guarding the team's goal and preventing the opposing team from scoring.
- **Defender:** this position's primary duty is to prevent the opponent from having a good shot at the goal. The defender also works to gain possession of the ball and pass it to a teammate for an attack.
- **Midfielder:** also known as the "halfback," this position plays a "transitional" game from defense to offense and vice versa. Usually the midfielder is the most active player on the field and key to maintaining team continuity.
- **Forward:** this position has the primary responsibility of scoring and also assists the midfielder in shifting play from defense to offense.

It's important to remember that any player may score a goal, regardless of position.

HOW CAN I BECOME A BETTER PLAYER?

There are several basic skills in soccer that can be learned at any age and mastered by those players who continually practice them.

Passing is kicking, pushing or heading the ball to a teammate or to a space where a teammate can run to the ball. A player may lightly tap the ball to a teammate several feet away or kick it strongly to move it down the field. The ball may scoot along the ground or may be kicked into the air.

Most players use two types of kicks to pass to a teammate or shoot towards the goal:

- **instep drive** which is a powerful kick.
- **push pass** which is done using the inside of the foot. The push pass is more accurate than the instep drive, but is less powerful.

Dribbling is transporting the ball under control from one area to another. In soccer, you can't use your hands, so players dribble the ball with their feet, using light taps on the ball to move it along the ground.

Controlling (or tapping) is stopping the ball in flight or on the ground, then controlling it by either dribbling or passing it to teammates. There are many ways to trap a ball:

- allowing it to hit your chest at an angle that deflects it to the ground where it can be controlled.
- allowing it to hit your thigh or your knee to deflect it to the ground where it can be controlled.
- using your foot to stop it.

Heading is unique to soccer. It's used to stop or pass a ball that's too high to kick or control with your chest. It's also used effectively to score. However, don't use it until your coach shows you the proper technique!

WHO'S IN CONTROL OF THE GAME?

AYSO recommends the use of three (3) game officials:

- One Referee and
- Two Linespersons.

The **Referee** is the ultimate authority during a game. The referee's chief responsibilities are to make the game as fun, fair and safe for players as possible.

The referee enforces the rules - which in soccer are called *Laws* - by calling offenses and determining if goals have been scored.

The **Linesperson** provides vital assistance to the referee by signaling when the ball has gone out of play and which team gets possession. Linespersons also assist with substitutions and the general control of the game.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO PLAY?

Soccer has limited equipment requirements. However, most AYSO teams play in uniforms (shirt, shorts and socks) supplied by the Region. Shinguards are mandatory during both practices and games. Soccer shoes are also advisable, but not necessary.

Regions provide all the field equipment such as goals, nets and flags.

The Equipment List:

- **One Enthusiastic Player!**
- **Shirt**
- **Shorts**
- **Socks**
- **Shoes** (*soccer shoes are advisable*)
- **Shinguards** (*mandatory*)

THE VERY BASIC RULES OF THE GREAT GAME OF SOCCER

Rules in soccer are called **Laws** and there are seventeen (17) of them. [if you'd like a full listing of the rules, visit [the FIFA Laws of the Game page](#)] We won't get into all seventeen here, but give you a general outline so that you can get a feel for how the game is played. Generally, the Laws require that referees stop the game when something has happened which is unfair or unsafe.

THE OBJECT The object of soccer is for players to get the ball into their opponent's goal using any part of their body except their arms and hands. Only goalkeepers may use their hands while inside their own penalty area.

KICKOFF A kickoff is taken from the center circle at the beginning of the game, beginning of the second half and after each goal.

THROW IN After the ball has completely crossed the side boundary lines - *called touchlines* - a throw in is awarded against the team that last touched the ball. The throw in is taken from where the ball left the field and **must be** thrown with two hands from behind and over the head, while both feet are on the ground and on or behind the touchline.

GOAL KICK The goal kick is taken by the defending team each time the ball crosses the goal line and was last touched by an attacking player. The ball may be placed anywhere in the goal area and is not considered back in play until it has been kicked out of the penalty area.

CORNER KICK The corner kick is taken by the attacking team each time the ball is kicked by the defense over its own goal line. The ball is placed within the three-foot arc in the corner of the field (nearest to where the ball went out of play) and kicked into play by the attacking team.

PENALTY KICK The penalty kick is awarded when a defending player commits one of the 10 penal (major) fouls within their own penalty area while the ball is still in play. The penalty kick is taken by a player from the offended team from a spot 12 yards from the goal. All players must remain outside the penalty area, 10 yards from the ball, and behind the penalty-kick mark until the kick is taken, except for the kicker and the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper's feet must remain stationary on the goal line until the ball is kicked. At the referee's signal, the kicker attempts to kick the ball into the opponent's goal and the goalkeeper tries to stop the ball from scoring.

MISCONDUCT There are two kinds of misconduct:

- Actions resulting in a caution (yellow card) from the referee.
- Actions resulting in a player being sent off or ejected from the field (red card).

A referee may also warn a player to improve his or her conduct (or unsportsmanlike behavior) before a caution is issued.

OFFSIDE A player is offside if they are ahead of the ball, except if they:

- are in their own half of the field.
- have two opponents even with or between him and the opponent's goal line. The referee's "moment of judgement" is the instant the ball is played, not when it is received.
- are the first to receive the ball from a throw in, corner kick or goal kick.
- are not involved in active play by interfering with play, interfering with and opponent, or gaining an advantage by being in that position.

PENAL FOULS

There are 10 major fouls that result in a **direct free kick** (DFK) and from which a goal may be directly scored against the opponents.

To be a major foul, the offense must be, in the referee's judgement, intentionally committed.

The 10 fouls are divided into two groups:

These six require that the foul be committed carelessly, recklessly or with disproportionate force:

- **Kicking** or attempting to kick an opponent.
- **Striking** or attempting to strike an opponent.
- **Pushing** an opponent.
- **Charging** an opponent.
- **Tripping** an opponent.
- **Jumping** into an opponent.

These four require only that they be committed:

- When **tackling** an opponent, making contact with the opponent before the ball.
- **Spitting** at an opponent.
- **Holding** an opponent.
- **Handling** the ball deliberately.

NON-PENAL FOULS

There are five (5) minor fouls that result in an **individual free kick** (IFK). At least one additional player of either team *must* touch the ball before a goal can be scored from an IFK.

Dangerous Play: including high kicking near another player's head or trying to play a ball held by a goalkeeper.

Fair Charge Away From the Ball: fairly charging when the ball is not within playing distance.

Impeding the Progress of an Opponent: getting between an opponent and the ball when not playing the ball.

Charging the Goalkeeper: shoulder-to-shoulder contact within the penalty area.

Goalkeeper Infringements:

4. taking more than four steps while controlling the ball with their hands or otherwise intentionally disrupting the flow of the game.
5. playing ball with hands when ball is kicked by a teammate.

Code of Conduct

AN IMPORTANT RULE ON THE FIELD AND OFF

AYSO has always encouraged good sportsmanship in all its programs. "Good Sportsmanship", in fact, is one of the **five philosophies** listed in our National Bylaws. We strongly recommend and encourage all individual Regions to promote good sportsmanship through dynamic programs.

The following Codes may vary from Region to Region, however, all define the fundamentals of good behavior - which is simply being courteous and respectful to everyone involved in the game. The way we figure it, players, volunteers and parents who understand what is expected of them in regards to good sportsmanship will probably act with good sportsmanship. Remember, it just doesn't happen - being a good sport needs to be taught by example, encouraged at all times and taught at every opportunity!

PLAYERS CODE

Play for the fun of it, not just to please your parents or coach.

Play by the Laws of the Game.

Never argue with or complain about referees' calls are decisions.

Control your temper. Most of all, resist the temptation to retaliate when you feel you have been wronged.

Concentrate on playing soccer with your best efforts. Work equally hard for your team as for yourself.

Be a good sport by cheering all good plays, whether it's your team or your opponent's.

Treat all players as you would like to be treated.

Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve your skills and feel good. Don't be a showoff or a ball hog.

Cooperate with your coaches, teammates, opponents and the referees.

PARENTS' CODE

As a parent, you play a special role in contributing to the needs and development of youngsters.

Through your encouragement and good example, you can help assure that all the boys and girls learn good sportsmanship and self-discipline. In AYSO, young people learn to work together, to sacrifice for the good of the team, to enjoy winning and deal appropriately with defeat - all while becoming physically fit and healthy. *Best of all, they have fun.*

SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

Supporting your child by giving encouragement and showing interest in their team is very important.

Help your child work toward skill improvement and good sportsmanship in every game. Teach your child that hard work and an honest effort are often more important than victory - *that way your child will always be a winner despite the outcome of the game!*

ALWAYS BE POSITIVE

Parents serve as role models for their children. Become aware of this and work to be a positive role model. Applaud good plays by your child's team *as well as* good plays by the opposing team.

Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from youth sports activities.

Remember that your *child* is the one playing soccer, not you. It's very important to let children establish their own goals - to play the game for themselves. Take care not to impose your own standards and goals on them.

Don't put too heavy a burden on your child to win games. Surveys reveal that **72% of children would rather play for a losing team than ride the bench for a winning team.**

Children play for the fun of playing.

REINFORCE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Positive reinforcement is the best way to help your child achieve their goals and their natural fear of failure. Nobody likes to make mistakes. If your child does make one, remember it's all part of learning, so encourage your child's efforts and point out the good things your child accomplished.

DON'T BE A SIDELINE COACH OR REFEREE

Coaches and referees are usually parents just like you. They volunteer their time to help make your child's youth soccer experience a positive one. They need your support too.

That means refraining from coaching or refereeing from the sidelines. As a volunteer organization, there's usually always an opportunity for you to take your interest in coaching or refereeing to the next level and become one yourself!

COACHES CODE

Enthusiastically support and practice the *"Everyone Plays," "Good Sportsmanship" and "Positive Coaching"* philosophies of AYSO.

Be reasonable in your demands on a young player's time, energy, enthusiasm and performance on the field.

Impress on your players that they must abide by the Laws of the Game at all times.

Develop team respect for the ability of opponents and for the judgement of referees and opposing coaches.

Ensure that your players' soccer experience is one of fun and enjoyment (winning is only part of it). Players should never be yelled at or ridiculed for making mistakes or losing a game.

Set a good example and be generous with your praise when it is deserved. Children need a coach they can respect.

Keep informed of sound principles of coaching, growth and child development.

Check your equipment and playing facilities. They should meet safety standards and be appropriate for the age and ability of your players.

Follow the advice of a physician when determining when an injured child is ready to play again.

REFEREES CODE

Always remember that the game is for the players. Player safety and fair play come first.

Study and learn the laws of the Game and understand the "spirit" of the Laws. Help fellow referees do the same.

Encourage and enforce the AYSO Philosophies of *"Everyone Plays," "Positive Coaching" and "Good Sportsmanship."*

Respect other referees' decisions and do not publicly criticize another official.

Wear the proper uniform and keep it in good condition.

Maintain good physical condition so you can keep up with the action.

Stay calm when confronted with emotional reactions from players, coaches and parents.

Honor accepted game assignments. In an emergency, find a replacement.

Support good sportsmanship with a kind word to players, coaches and parents of both teams when deserved.

Always be fair and impartial, avoiding conflicts of interest. Decisions based on personal bias are dishonest and unacceptable.

FCYSA Player Development Guidelines

| | U5 | U6 | U8 | U10 | U12 | U14 | U16 | U18 |
|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Skills | | | | | | | | |
| Kick with the laces and inside or outside of the foot instead of the toe. | | | | | | | | |
| All player run toward the same goal. | | | | | | | | |
| Player stops when the ball goes out of bounds | | | | | | | | |
| Knows to throw the ball in when it goes out over a touch line. | | | | | | | | |
| Knows to kick a ball in when it goes out over the goal line. | | | | | | | | |
| Knows how to start a game. | | | | | | | | |
| Knows how to pass a ball | | | | | | | | |
| Knows how to receive a ball (trap). | | | | | | | | |
| Concept of Offense | | | | | | | | |
| Concept of Defense | | | | | | | | |
| Ability to dribble the ball | | | | | | | | |
| Ability to control the ball | | | | | | | | |
| Ability to trap the ball on the ground and in the air. | | | | | | | | |
| Able to head a ball. | | | | | | | | |
| Players experience all positions | | | | | | | | |
| Players/coaches select positions | | | | | | | | |
| Corner kick ability | | | | | | | | |
| Penalty kick ability | | | | | | | | |
| Direct kick understanding and ability | | | | | | | | |
| Indirect kick understanding and ability | | | | | | | | |
| Goalkeeping skills | | | | | | | | |
| Able to chip a ball | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy - I.e. offside trap, set plays, speed variance, feint, etc. | | | | | | | | |
| Back pass | | | | | | | | |
| Through pass | | | | | | | | |
| Wall pass | | | | | | | | |
| Off sides | | | | | | | | |
| Field Positions | | | | | | | | |
| On-field Leadership and communication | | | | | | | | |
| Speed | | | | | | | | |
| Agility | | | | | | | | |

ARTICLES FOR COACHES, PARENTS, and REFEREES

Coaches

The Three Evil "L's"

Tom Hart

Anyone who has attended a coaching clinic has probably heard of avoiding the three "L's"- Lines, Laps, and Lectures. Unfortunately that was how many parents experienced sports as a participant. Modern methods of coaching youth place emphasis on "game activities" rather than "drills". Game Activities are easily understood childhood games that have the added element of a ball. Avoiding "lines" in coaching soccer is not difficult. "Tag" games while dribbling a ball are valuable in that every player is forced to dribble and chase others in an effort to tag them. Since directional changes occur quickly and in an unpredictable fashion tag begins to resemble the real game of soccer. Opposite to this method would be to arrange several cones in a row and have players dribble through- zigzagging through the cones. Not a horrible activity, but predictable and it definitely does not resemble the "real" game. When we have young players standing in line "waiting their turn" we are wasting valuable training time. Kids like and need action in their activities and who likes to wait in line? True, "drills" with lines are sometimes easier for the novice coach to organize, but often behavior problems occur when young players are idle.

Take a lap. Almost every athlete has heard that phrase from his coach. Why? Well for one, long slow distance training is regarded as excellent conditioning for endurance sports. And it's quick and easy for the coach to organize. Many coaches think of soccer as an endurance sport so it figures that lap running is an ideal warm-up. Unfortunately good lap runners do not equate good soccer players. A far more effective method of training soccer players would include the ball and game activities as the warm-up. As fitness training lap running is not ideal because soccer is not played at a consistent pace throughout the match. Soccer is a game with periods of standing, walking, jogging, and all out sprinting- training should replicate this type of action.

When do we get to play? I heard this at one of my first soccer camps nineteen years ago. I thought I had just explained and demonstrated some brilliant aspect of soccer skill to a group of seven year olds and asked "any questions?" The demo was brief- less than a minute. But a minute sitting down is FOREVER to a child. This want to play coupled with a shorter attention span requires coaches to use activities that are "action packed" with brief (10 seconds) instructions. Lectures and detailed explanations have no place on a youth soccer field. Let the game be the teacher.

The "L" that coaches must use- "LAUGHTER"-if the players are silent, odds are they're not having fun. Laughs, screams, giggles and noise are what coaches need to hear, that way you know that the activity is FUN. And that's the object of sports.

We have sample practice plans from the Assistant Coach Series posted. The Assistant Coach is a collection of twenty practice plans for coaches containing warm-up and game activities for teaching youth soccer players. (Available for U6 & U8's, U10's, and U12's.) Another great resource for training games is "The Peak Performance" also available from US Youth Soccer.

Tom Hart,

Director of Recreational Coaching Education

US Youth Soccer

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Coaching Principles - The Game is the Best Teacher

If you can, take some time to run or participate in a clinic for beginner players. It's a huge gift to these people and it will refocus you enormously about the purpose of coaching and the sport's core - it's fun!

Recently, we gave a free clinic in Charlotte, North Carolina at an awesome soccer facility, Ramblewood Park. The neighborhood kids that come out for these weekly clinics are African-Americans and are new to the game. Guess what? They love it!

The players showed up in all kinds of shoes, pants, and shirts. Some walked over, some biked by, some stood a 100 yards off and watched - nervous the game will bite?! But as we introduced ourselves, got their names, told some jokes, and got them moving with a ball, then were well on our way to a fun session.

If they are even remotely curious (aren't all kids?) and you have sufficient energy to present something you love, the clinic will be a big kick.

The key to coaching beginners is to not have an serious agenda or too many expectations and by all means, **don't over-coach!** If you over-emphasize technique, structure and tactics, they will flee from just another sport governed by rules, plays, and adults. Soccer is the most democratic sport - anyone can play anywhere. It's centered around the player, not the coach.

The players we worked with did not want to learn or be taught - they would found this confusing and insulting. They were present to have fun. If they picked up a skill or tactic, it would occur because of the session's exercises, not something we told them.

The key for grabbing the attention of a beginner player is giving them the ball and saying "Go and Create!" Each player, from his or her first touch, needs to be encouraged to dribble and shoot first, pass second. In the US, we may tend to overemphasize passing in that players are trained to give the ball away prematurely. Sure, there is a time to keep possession, but instincts to be confident with the ball at one's feet must be engrained and fortified early on.

The best thing about working with beginner players is that you are exposing them to a whole new game, the world's biggest sport at that. You are presenting a sport and a group activity for which millions of people across the globe share appreciation, passion, and knowledge.

Go make a difference in a child's life, one that has not seen soccer yet. It will be the best thing you have done for the sport all year, I promise.

Coaching Principles - The Opportunities of Playing Soccer

Matt Spear

People play soccer all over the world because it's fun. Plain and simple. As coaches, we can get so caught up in the techniques, tactics, and winning vs. losing that we forget the bedrock of the sport - it's fun to play.

So as you plot your training sessions, lineups, and strategies, try to step back and look at why kids love to play. Here are a few of the opportunities of playing the game.

To Try Something New

Every new sport is exciting in its novelty. Soccer is especially enthralling to take up because so many other people are playing, anyone can play, and it uniquely involves the feet.

Meeting New People

Each experience that involves other people is compelling for the underlying foundation to meet new friends, whether it be teammates, coaches, or parents. Soccer brings lots of different kinds of people together as a bond in a healthy environment.

Enjoy the World's Most Popular Game

People are always curious about "the biggest thing." Soccer is the most global sport and the breadth, history, and media coverage of the game across the world is going to grab most any curious sports enthusiast. Kids included.

Improve as a Player

Soccer is a game that offers countless skills, formations, and strategies that a player (and coaches and parents) can study at end and never fully get a grasp on. Players love the game because of the technique, tactics, athleticism, and intellect that it engenders.

Work in a Team

Striving with others towards a common goal is clearly a challenge that extends well off the soccer field. Soccer is a great example where the individual's effort and ability are all essential, yet subordinate to the growth and performance of the team. We all know that a team with chemistry can beat a team of individuals.

The Chance to Compete

Everyone needs an arena to push him or herself. Life is, to some degree, full of struggles and soccer offers both a release and an opportunity to push oneself. To understand and harness one's competitive instincts is an on-going process.

Learn from Winning AND Losing

Life is also full of both jubilation and frustration. It is how one deals with and, most importantly, learns from the highs and lows that will shape one's composure and flexibility.

Stay with the Sport

As the world's biggest sport, soccer offers a life after playing where one can stay involved as a coach, referee, parent, administrator, and fan. As coaches, we should always mentor our players to celebrate the game as life-long enthusiasts.

Over-Coaching: Resist the Urge!

by: Dave Simeone
U.S. Women's National Staff Coach

Most of the sports that are currently predominant in our culture involve the coach as an active participant. Although the coach is along the touchline, in the coaching box or on the bench the opportunity for being overly involved with the players constantly exists. These opportunities are aside from the usual timeouts or substitutions. These typical stoppages in play already contribute to many sports being coach oriented rather than player oriented. Combine the standard loud encouragement (i.e.- screaming & yelling) with animated cheerleading and you have a excess of over - coaching.

Soccer is different than most sports. The involvement of the coach is secondary to those participating in the game: the players. While coach oriented activities (basketball, baseball, American football) demand, and allow for, a high degree of involvement by the coach during competitive games, soccer is different. It would be more appropriate to contend that soccer coaches do their work and prepare their teams during the week. By the time it comes to the game on Saturday morning it is up to the participants to act, make decisions, and play! It is essential that the youth soccer coach understand their role. If continuous over - involvement during the game is not the best way to assist the players then the coach has a responsibility to alter their behavior and learn to take a different tact. Sports such as baseball and American football are what we would refer to as "set up" sports. Between pitches (baseball) or plays (American football) time and opportunity exists for diagrams to be drawn or the coach to reposition an outfielder. Soccer does not allow for similar stoppages since play is continuous and fairly uninterrupted. Players must be allowed, and ultimately able, to think and make decisions on their own. They must learn to solve problems during the game. This self - sufficient type of thinking necessitates that players learn from the game and utilize any and all information that they receive and process towards finding solutions to the problems they encounter.

TAKE SOME TIME TO EVALUATE WHETHER YOU MIGHT BE OVER-COACHING.....

Do you find that you are hoarse and your voice is strained following a game?

Is the information that you give your players during half - time emotional but non - specific in terms of assisting them solve the problems they encounter?

Do you utilize catch phrases such as "suck it up, boys" or "no pain, no gain" in attempting to motivate youngsters?

Do you find that you are sweating and running just as much during the game as the players?

Are your pre-game, half-time or post-game speeches similar to the president's state of the union address?

In addressing the players do you ramble and cause the players to wonder "What's his/her point"?

Are your remarks and instructions made during the game and to players repetitive and redundant? Is this information general, non-specific jargon and cheerleading altering the player's performance?

Are you reluctant to allow players to make their own decisions during a game? Are you constantly barraging players with instructions during the game?

Do you coach in absolutes such as always or never?

Do you choreograph and arrange players into strict positions with instructions such as "never go out of your zone" or "defenders never cross midfield"?

Have you instructed players to refrain from passing the ball to certain teammates because their present level of ability is, from your adult perspective, inadequate?

Do you spend an excessive amount of time in practice on throw-ins, kick-offs, corner kicks or penalty kicks?

Are you utilizing methods of training that do not allow for players to acquire and improve technical skill, tactical decision making, physical stamina and confidence? (i.e. - dribbling through cones, standing in lines awaiting a turn).

Do your practices resemble games or activities that produce the same degree of movement/stimulation as a soccer game?

Are you attempting to improve the team's level of fitness by minimizing the time the players have contact with the ball? Do you view the game as a contest based only on fitness that leads to a preoccupation with running?

Are you openly emotional or upset when addressing the players to the point that they stare at you while thinking "what is he/she so disturbed about"?

As the coach do you have difficulty accepting a realistic approach to winning and losing? Do you believe that winning is synonymous with player development?

Do you enjoy and have fun coaching youngsters? Are you consistently aggravated and apprehensive about coaching?

Do the players seem to enjoy playing because of the input and involvement of you, the coach?

The games that youngsters play on Saturday mornings in their local leagues and associations should be viewed as a vehicle for learning. The same is true concerning their one, or two, days a week in practice.

The acquisition of playing ability is a long term process that begins at the ages of 5 or 6. It is unrealistic to expect youngsters at 10 or 11 years of age, and younger, to have an adult perspective on the game. Because of their maturity level youngsters are learning about the broadest parameters of play. They are at a stage where development is the priority since the acquisition of skill, elementary decision making and an appreciation and passion for soccer are founded. Young players learn, and are a product of their experiences. They learn more from their experiences (games, activities, the environment) than they do from the coach. The role of the coach is to then organize and set up games and activities that the players enjoy and learn from.

Unfortunately, the majority of over-coaching occurs with youngsters who are between the ages of 5 to 11. It occurs, in part, because of the "profile" of the average parent/coach. These parent/coaches bring little practical soccer experience with them. At the same time they are learning about soccer they are learning about coaching. The availability of coaching education throughout state associations, combined with the information that is presented in the courses, simplifies coaching. Once youth coaches are exposed to this information they can assume their role with greater effectiveness.

While coaches are somewhat responsible to educate the parents of their players parents, in turn, should evaluate the effectiveness of the coach: is my child learning to play soccer or is the coach preoccupied with drills that only permit the players to play at soccer? Parents should evaluate the demeanor and approach the coach takes towards games: is the coach willing to allow youngsters to play the game for themselves or is he/she absorbed with their active, but unnecessary, participation? Is the coach most concerned with making decisions for the players rather than accepting that the players must make decisions on their own?

Overall, there should be uniform agreement and understanding between the parents, coaches and league or association administrators on this matter. This shared responsibility helps ensure that play remains a leisure activity with a long term interest of player development. REMEMBER.....Play is a key word in player development!

Coaching Principles - Creating a Team Bond

Are individuals more apt to act on their own or as a group? Tough question. But soccer is a sport that surely enables players to create as individuals, but who must successfully perform with teammates. The phrase that a team is more than a sum of its parts is perhaps more accurate and telling in our sport than any other.

One of the keys to success is clearly team building, creating a cohesive unit that enjoys working hard together. There certainly is no perfect way to accomplish this as every team is unique. But some guidelines may help. Here are six essential keys, we think, to creating a team bond.

Leaders

The captains are crucial in representing the team, but every player is a leader. Encourage the potential and positive contribution in each player. Emphasize to each player and to the group that leadership can come in many shapes and many forms. Every player counts and needs to be a leader in his own, even subtle, way.

Starters and Non-Starters

The term "substitute" seems to have a negative connotation, so think of another term like reserves. Too many players consider themselves inferior and less important to the team's success if they are not starting. This can lead to ill-will between players, frustration against the coach, and feeling of being left out for non-starters. Remind the players that a starting line-up is never in concrete and reinforce this by rotating starters especially as a reward for solid play, a positive attitude and hard work. Encourage players on the sidelines to stay mentally involved in the game and always be positive when you remove a player from the game. Constructive criticism can come later, after the game or in the next training session.

Training Sessions are Important

The players will improve very little if the practices are not well-organized, competitive, challenging, and fun. The training sessions need to be crisp and attendance should be required. Convince the players that practice is crucial to the team's success. If players miss practices or don't have a good attitude in practice, their playing time should be affected. Reward the players who train the most diligently with a starting position and the urgency for practices will quickly catch on.

Learning from Wins AND Losses

Many times, coaches have a hard time keeping the team consistent because they get too excited from wins and too distraught from losses. It's crucial to be a good example in learning from both wins and losses. Losses, like wins, have moments to celebrate, learn from and build on. You are never as good as your best win or as bad as your worst loss.

Off the Field

It's so important that you realize that you are managing people. They need to be treated as individuals. Try to connect with each player away from soccer topics such as knowing their families, learning about their hobbies, and following their academics. Plus get the team together for non-soccer fun such as meals, going to movies, and playing other sports. They will like each other better and be better teammates as a result.

Humor

Having a sense of humor and being able to sling it at the right moment is a gift we all have. Don't ever get too serious, soccer is just a game - true the world's biggest and most beautiful - but still just a game.

This article was borrowed from [Direct Kick](#), a monthly coach's newsletter.

Parents Information

Winning and Losing: Keeping a Sane Perspective!

Richard Stratton and Jonathan Buzby

As parents, how many of us get more upset about our child's team losing than they do? Do we also revel in a win long after our children have forgotten what the outcome even was? Have you ever listened to teams during pregame warm-ups as they discuss their opponent of the day? Often you overhear comments like "Gee this team is really good, I hear they are undefeated" and both teams are saying this!

Game outcome is important, at least for a while but it doesn't really make a long lasting impression unless it is blown out of proportion. This isn't to say that children will enjoy losing or not be excited about winning. But in the end they should be most thrilled about having competed.

We need to remember why the children participate in youth sports. If you ask most children why they play sports, the answers won't include, "To learn about sportsmanship," "For the social aspects," or "That's the only way I'll ever get a scholarship." What most kids will tell you is that they play sports because it's fun and they get an opportunity to learn skills. As parents it is our responsibility to help create a positive sports environment for our children. You wouldn't want another parent putting your child down for making an error, why should you? Would you want to continue going to an activity that every time you made a mistake you were criticized? Do you like to be lectured after a long day at work about all the things you could have done better? Put yourself in your child's shoes. Think about how you act at your children's games. Are you a self-designated sideline coach? The only person giving instructions to the players should be the head coach or the assistant coaches. We often forget (or have never experienced) what it's like playing in a competitive atmosphere. It's hard enough running, getting where you're supposed to be and playing your best, let alone having to listen to three different people yell three sets of instructions that you're not doing or should do (and usually never the same things). Next time you're going to yell something to your child, try yelling, "Good job, keep up the good work" and leave it at that. Hopefully the parents around you will follow your lead. I guarantee your child won't tell you after the game, "Jeez Dad/Mom, I missed you yelling instructions to me during the game."

Listen to post-game discussions. The most important thing to the kids after a game is likely to be what the snack was that day or where they are going after the game rather than who won or lost. You know what, kids are smarter than we think!

The Learning Moment

David P. Hillgrove

Editor's Note: David Hillgrove is Commissioner of the Inner City Soccer Program in Richmond, Va.

I had a most blessed summer last year in that I was afforded the opportunity to provide daily support for my children (read: as a free lance writer, I took care of my kids all day, while my wife worked outside of the home). It was at times joy-filled, occasionally frustrating, and always enlightening. I'm not sure that there is a better way to "surround oneself with mirrors" (and thus learn a lot about yourself) than to spend the day with (in my case) three daughters, ages 2, 6 and 8. They don't let you miss much.

Because of my set-up, I naturally spent a lot of time at events set aside for moms. And, conversely, when my wife came home, she often took complete charge of the kids to give me a little breather. When this took place at our community swimming pool, I took the opportunity to observe my favorite display of parental confusion: those dreadful Learning moments versus Teaching moments. They intrigue me because they remind me so much of the twenty years when I have observed soccer parents, both positive and negative. In addition, I find many dad's attitudes (including my own) quite humorous at times.

Here's what I mean: Dad plops into the pool. His children couldn't be prouder. The smile beaming from their faces says so. Dad should be content to drink all this in, and follow his offspring throughout the day. If he/we were smart, the child's agenda would be the most important schedule of the day, in that Dad is so rarely alone with the kids.

But no-o-o-o-o.

"Dad is gonna teach you how to do a flip turn today."

Now, Junior doesn't necessarily want to do a flip turn; he'd rather jump on Dad's back, splash Dad, frolick gaily with Dad, laugh out loud (and show all those silent friends of his how much fun His dad can be!).

More than once I burst into laughter hearing: "But Son, I'm not always here, so I want to take this time to show you how to be a champion. I want to make you great. Don't you want to be a winner?"

And there you have the difference between the Learning Moment and the Teaching Moment.

The Learning Moment is the attitude of teacher, parent, friend, that surrenders the need to talk, and absorbs the need to listen. The Learning Moment provides full faith and credit in your young subject and empowers them to be so advanced that they could actually be aware of what they need best. The Learning Moment speaks to your young friend by saying: "The time is right for fertility, for ground that is plowed and fertilized, for an environment that is ready for learning. All I have to do is shut up, listen, and we may both learn from you."

The Teaching Moment is all about arrogance, omnipotence and self-servitude. The Teaching Moment assumes that no one can influence this helpless child like Me; "I have the answers and you should be thankful that I am willing to share them at this time. I am here, you are there, take out your note pad and be prepared to be amazed."

Learning Moment: "I love you and I am proud of you and I'll do whatever you want to do today. I trust you and I know we'll have fun. Besides, I'd like to learn a little bit about your world, also."

Teaching Moment: "I am 'The Man,' and I am here, now. Granted I am in Seattle three days out of five, so that is why you must pay attention Now. I cannot always be here for you. You must watch my every move so you can become better, because I said so. Learn what I am teaching."

How does this translate into valuable soccer lessons?

Your child comes off the field, having missed an easy goal. Or his man travels unmarked into the penalty area to secure his team's win with a late minute goal. He trudges off dejected. He is hurting. His swollen eyes gaze up at you for support.

Learning Moment: "How do you feel? What can we do to forget about this for awhile? Would you like a lifesaver?? Teaching Moment: "Keep your toe down on those shots, son! And for god's sake, stay goal side of your man. How many times do I have to tell you?"

Your child is cut from his middle school team (or travel team, or whatever). He is embarrassed. Ridiculed. Dejected. Feeling Worthless.

The Learning Moment would address his positive points, his wonderful family or his bright future, because He Is Hurting And Desperately Needs To Learn How To Feel.

The Teaching Moment would review what he did wrong (despite his need to get completely away from soccer), or plot revenge on the coach. The adult substitutes his agenda for his child's.

The Learning Moment/Teaching Moment controversy surrounds us everywhere in soccer: Substitution/Playing time; playing for a losing team; dealing with the ostracized child on your daughter's team; the child of divorced parents; the child of alcoholic parents; even the championship team with poor sportsmanship.

While soccer is specifically the vehicle this author utilizes to share Teaching and Learning Moment theory, everyone would agree that there is a lot to be learned on the subject of parenting in the soccer world. Since soccer is a pastime that is usually family-oriented, and families tend to spend a great deal of time together in soccer, there are parenting issues here that are as real as in any Pavlovian Experiment. The Learning Moment is the ideal mindset we should be waiting to support our children with. The Teaching Moment attitude may be the heresy we are trying to eradicate from our pre-self-actualized lives.

Because the very nature of a child is that of an "incomplete product" or an evolving potential, adults have to be very careful where they choose to teach, and when they chose to listen and learn.

And perhaps children learn most effectively when we restrain our effervescence and try the latter. Listening and learning from our children can be good, because it is here that they learn how to teach themselves. It speaks to the trust we have in them, and the love that we find so difficult to put into words.

Understanding when to speak and when to listen may be the very behavior that proves to our kids that we do love them. And since we are supposed to be teammates in this growing up thing, it is in listening that we may need our most amount of "training."

For Coaches and parents: Cheshire (Connecticut) Soccer Club's Dos and Don'ts

edited by Dan Woog

DON'Ts:

Don't shout instructions to the player with the ball. The player has enough problems maintaining possession while making quick and difficult decisions about what to do next. He or she must learn to make decisions without your input.

Don't use such phrases as "boot the ball," "kick it," or "send it." First, you violate rule No. 1; second, you encourage panic rather than good decision making, and mindless kicking rather than possession.

Don't try to control the game from the sidelines. You can't! A soccer coach is not an active participant in the game. Soccer is played, controlled and ultimately coached by the players on the field. Teach players to "coach" themselves.

Don't try to teach "aggressiveness." In soccer, what is perceived as "aggressive play" merely reflects the confidence a player has in his or her own abilities. Teach the skills that generate confidence; encourage players to believe in themselves. If you do, they will play "aggressively."

Don't abuse game officials, or show disrespect for opponents. Referees make fewer mistakes than your players; your opponents are not your enemy. Be aware of the example you set for your players.

Don't forget rule No. 1!

DOs

Do offer suggestions to players not currently involved in what is happening on the field. Brief words of advice are helpful to players who have time to consider them (those who are either out of the match or on the field far from the ball).

Do encourage players to use the skills they are being taught. Encourage - and sometimes push - players to experiment in scrimmages and games. If this approach costs goals, learn to accept temporary setbacks as the price of progress, and recognize them as opportunities to help players improve. Soccer is best learned through trial and error.

Do teach players to coach themselves on the field. By the time they find themselves on a full-size field they will be unable to hear you anyway. Players must learn to assist each other in making hundreds of split-second decisions each game.

Do teach players the game's skills, and encourage them to hold the ball long enough to make good decisions about what to do next.

The Role of the Soccer Parent

Matt Spear

It's an ongoing work in progress and often an uphill struggle. Many parents did not play the sport, so they have a hard time understanding the skills, tactics, and nuances of the game. This, in combination with the ever "living through their kids" issue, leads to many soccer parents who view the sport from both a foreign perspective and emotional imbalance. The following is an excellent take from a soccer parent who understands and cherishes her role.

Top 5 things parents should do:

1. Pay attention when watching your child play. There will be a test in the car on the way home!
2. Stay positive -- Cheer!! Don't yell.
3. Support each player on the team, not just your kid -- he/she can't do it alone!
4. Set a good example and never yell at the referee.
5. Volunteer! Being involved in your child's soccer organization is fun and you'll make many wonderful friends!!

Sports, Kids, and Parents

Hal Skinner

I started playing competitive sports when I was very young. One or both of my parents came to most of my games.

I learned the awful truth at the very start. My parents voices, coming from the stands, had a major impact on my concentration on the game.

I had been raised, as I hope all kids are, to listen to everything my parents said. The same went for my coach. Anything that one of those three distinct voices of authority said, I listened. Even if the words were not directed at me, I listened. Even when I did not want to hear them, I heard them loud and clear. When a kid hears one of those three voices, he CANNOT ignore them.

When I was 9 years old and there were 10 people in the stands, I heard them. It broke my concentration. It took some of the fun out of the game for me. It would sometimes distract me so much that it ruined the whole game for me.

When I was 24 with 1,000 people lining both sides of the field yelling, I still picked those three voices out from all the rest. It is impossible to tune those three voices out.

Every parent wants their kid to be the best at everything they attempt. They want to be there to show their love and support for their kid, mine were no exception. Every kid wants to make their parent proud, I was no exception to that. That's the natural way of things and especially true when it comes to parents of kids on a sports team.

At 9 years old I found out I was going to have a major problem with my parents. We had to sit down and have a serious talk about how much their voices were affecting my performance.

After we talked it out we came to these conclusions;

1. There are two kinds of people at any sporting event, PLAYERS and FANS.
2. A PLAYER is an active participant in the game. Team members, coaches, umpires and/or referees fall into the players category. A player either plays a position in, coaches or calls the game.
3. A FAN is a non-participating observer. They neither play, coach or call the game. Their sole purpose is to cheer on their favorite team and players.
4. A parent is a FAN, unless they happen to be one of the coaches on the field.
5. Any attempts by FANS to become PLAYERS are not acceptable.

I would step into the batters box and my loving and supportive dad would yell out something like, "Follow the ball all the way to the bat". I was getting psyched up to bat. Now I'm staring at my dad wondering if he thinks I'm stupid. He's only yelled that to me 50 times before. It broke my concentration.

If the embarrassment had only stopped there. I struck out. On the way back to the dugout, of course, my loving and supportive dad had to try to console me, "You'll get em next time slugger". I wouldn't have been any more embarrassed if he would have stood up and yelled, "Oh, my poor sweet baby. How terrible you must feel. Come on up her and let daddy give you a big hug and make it all better". If we were real lucky we would all strike out so only three of us would have to go through that public humiliation an inning. What just happened? My dad, one of those three voices I could not ignore, just gave me coaching instructions and changed from a fan to a player. He broke my concentration, had an affect on my performance and possibly the outcome of the entire game. If this happens to your kid and their team loses, this is exactly what he will think too. It can take all the fun out of your kid's games.

Instead of being able to focus on being the best player and team member they can be, they have to stop and regain their composure and concentration. That is not what they signed up to do. They are there to play the game and have fun doing it. If they constantly have to worry about impressing their parents, it may be just enough pressure to suck every drop of fun out of their game.

All parents want to coach and advise their kids at their games; It should never happen while the kids are on the field. It will not be taken well at all. If it is something that absolutely must be said, say it when your kid is on the bench or in the dugout. It will be received a lot better there. Do it in a quiet and supportive tone of voice. NEVER yell anything from the stands in a stern or angry voice.

When a kid reaches the point that their parents take the training wheels off of their bike, one of them will still run along side with their arms out, to catch them if they should fall. Parents try and do the same thing from the stands too. You must come to the realization that your kid is fielding a position on a competitive organized sports team, just like the adults and professionals do. That is a very adult kind of thing for a kid to do.

A parent must give their kid the chance to prove they can do it by themselves. It may never happen if they are constantly given the feeling their parents are right there ready to catch them if they fall.

It is almost impossible for a parent to not yell these kind of things during their kids game. If the coach has done his job well, the kids know what they are supposed to do. They also know when they don't do it quite right. During the game, the last thing a kid wants to hear is one of their parents publicly pointing out what they did not do quite right, it just pours salt in their wound.

A good coach will go over the errors in the dugout or after the game. Every adult must choose their words and tone of voice very carefully during the game.

During the game it is very easy for a kid to perceive an adult yelling something to them, as the adult yelling AT them. No adult should ever yell anything during the game that might humiliate a kid in front of their parents, that can be devastating to a kid.

Some parents still haven't figured this out yet; If you ever make the mistake of yelling out constructive criticism to some other parent's kid, don't be surprised if that other kid's parents start yelling some constructive criticism back at you, or worse.

Remember, your voice is not one of the three voices that other kid is tuned into anyway. Let his parent make his own mistakes. Rest assured, whatever you yelled WAS heard by YOUR kid. If a mature adult can take your words that strongly, how do you think an impressionable young kid is going to think and feel about them.

Supportive cheers in general, directed at the entire team, are always welcomed by players and fans. A comment to a player that has just done something good is also welcomed by all. While the kids are on the field, LEAVE THE COACHING TO THE COACH. It is the only coaching the kids want to hear while they are on the field.

Be the supportive FAN your kid needs and wants you to be. As long as they know you are there, they will play their hearts out to make you proud. However, if you remind them you are there too much, they won't be able to do that.

Always remember, your kid will tune into your voice because you have done your job as a parent very well.

Now, do your job as your kid's biggest FAN just as well and make their game just as fun for them as you can possibly make it.

If you, as a parent, do not make their game as fun as it can be, your kid WILL give up. Your kid WILL quit. Your kid WILL feel like a loser. If your kid doesn't have a lot of fun, they can NEVER reach the point that they love the game. If you do not allow them to reach the point where they love the game, they can NEVER reach the point where they are the best at the sport they can possibly be. Find every way to make your kid's game as fun as it can be.

I have been playing for well over 30 years because, when I was a kid, my parents made and kept my games just as fun as they could possibly be. I came to love the game and then I became passionate about it.

Because my parents did that for me, here is what I did for them. I kept playing and now;

I am an ASA men's 'A' division, 1st place, national championship winner.

I was also voted the ASA men's 'A' div Most Valuable Pitcher in the nation.

I am very proud of that.

I am even more proud to say that, before all of that, I was and I will always be, MY PARENTS KID.

Keys to Peak Parental Performance

Youth soccer clubs are always seeking ways to rein in parental enthusiasm without dampening it. The Stone Mountain (Ga.) Youth Soccer Association recently distributed a clear, concise set of standards addressing that delicate balance:

Let the coaches coach. This includes goal setting and psyching up your child for practice and post game critiques. Having more than one "coach" confuses children.

Do not bribe or offer incentives. Leave motivation to the coach. Offering money for scoring goals, for example, distracts your child from concentrating properly in practices and games.

Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly.

Support all players on the team. Your child's teammates are not the enemy. When they are playing better than your child, she has a wonderful opportunity to learn.

Support the program. Get involved by volunteering, helping with fundraisers, car-pooling, or however else you can.

Encourage your child to talk with the coaches. "Taking responsibility" - whether about playing difficulties or missing an upcoming match - is a big part of soccer.

Understand and display appropriate game behavior. When you cheer appropriately, you help your child focus on the parts of the game he can control (positioning, decision-making, skills, etc.). If he begins focusing on elements he can't control (field conditions, the referee, the weather, etc.), he will not play up to his ability.

Monitor your child at home. Be sure she is eating and sleeping properly.

Help your child keep priorities straight. A youngster needs help balancing schoolwork, friendships, and other commitments besides soccer. But having made a commitment to soccer, she also needs help fulfilling her obligation to her team.

Pass the reality test. If your child's team loses but he played his best, help him see this as a "win." Remind him to focus on the process, not the end result. Fun and satisfaction should come from "striving to win." Conversely, do not let him be satisfied with "winning" if it comes from inadequate preparation and performance.

Keep soccer in its proper perspective. The game should not be larger than your life. If your child's performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Keep your own goals and needs separate from your child's. Remember that your relationship with your child will continue long after her competitive soccer days end.

Article courtesy of [Soccer America's](#) Youth Soccer Letter and editor Dan Woog.

Reflections at Game's End

David P. Hillgrove

The match is long ago over.

The referees... have moved on, leaving the day's multiple matches on the field, where they belong. The hollering coaches, the vociferous fans, the yellow cards... all but blur as they travel to their next assignment.

The Moms and Dads... have gathered siblings and players, piled into their Urban Assault Vehicles and hurried off to their next appointment on their over-booked social calendar. The Dads focused on the players' pride and the effort, while the Moms reflected on the result and the standing; but even for them, the game has been played, the result soon to be forgotten as the hectic family parade continues.

The Grandparents... have returned to their lonely abode. The memories of the afternoon centered on their offspring's seed... their wonderful and blame-free grandchildren. They understood little of the nuances of the game itself; in fact, the rules escaped all but the veterans of the elderly set. But the joy on their namesake's faces reminds them why they came. The happiness of the child's heart, the smile on their entire face following their "lucky" goal and the subsequent team celebration are what the Grandparents take home with them. There, in the Saturday's afterglow, they will file these memories away with so many from their children's past. And the perspective that they share on the game itself said nothing about the match's score, but spoke completely to the winning players.

The players... have removed their cleats and their shinguards and their long socks. Some changed quicker than others, who clearly sit around the perimeter of the field with nothing more to do than rest, laugh and relive a few of the many plays from the match now ended. They have drained their water bottles and forgiven their teammates for the errant passes, the missed traps, the misjudged serves. The competitive burn they felt for the opposition has long since passed, and many walk out to the cars with what was the enemy, just moments prior.

The League Administrator... removes the corner flags from yet another field. Each game melded into the dozens and hundreds of matches already played this season. His gaze reviews the lines that need repainting, the grass that needs recutting, the nets that need replacing. This game means no less or no more than the next. The ecstasy and the joy that the Game itself used to bring does so no longer. Though rarely thanked, this administrator knows the games would not continue without him, just as he realized that some faceless soul did the same for him when he was young. And thus, his reward.

The Coach... has given his final talk, summing up his feelings of the game and the players, interchanging the two. This veteran of so many last whistles has learned to leave the game and all its frustrations on the pitch, where it belongs.

Soon after he exits his car, he is enveloped in the realities of a lawn which needs cutting, gutters which need clearing and a birthday present for his own child, now in his late teens.

But his feeling takes on more of a melancholy tone, as this last game means the end of a way of life, a pattern of thinking, an investment of emotion. Somewhere in the quiet of the locker room there is hope that something he did to and for these players will help them to grow and make decisions on their own. And since this hope exists in a vacuum of reality, the coach never really knows if he made a difference.

He'd like to think that he affected eternity, in that he will never know where his influence will end, but with interpersonal communication being what it is "these days" he worries that he will never know. And since there is no "next season" for this coach to look forward to, he is left with the nagging feeling that he didn't do quite enough. Or that he could have done more.

But either way he doesn't know; and this uncertainty is what troubles him. For unlike a match where he can see the goals scored for and against, there is no scoreboard for life's lessons learned.

But it is on Life's field where he hopes the real successes will be realized for these many former players of his. A decade and a half of hollering, laughing, pointing and smiling has many memories but . . . more and more it was viewed as an investment.

They shared the present as he introduced his past, all for the players' future.

And through all of the road trips, the soiled seasons, the championship banners and the player tryouts, the Coach is centered on his first season, that first anxiety-filled annum when he thought he knew so much. Only now in his final match is it clear to him just how little he knew then, and perhaps how much he's learned since.

For beyond all the balls, all the calls, all the goals and all the souls, the Coach is at peace with the ME he gave all of them, and the THEY he received in return.

And it was good . . .

Ain't it a Durn Shame...

David P. Hillgrove

Ain't it a Durn Shame that there are people out there who can appreciate the intricacies of the vertical vs. horizontal bunt methods, the time-measured lead, the grip of a baseball across the seams rather than with them... as well as the double-team at the point of attack, the run-and-shoot, the Monster Defense... not to mention the baseline double post, the high-low motion offense, sagging zones... and yet, these same "sports fans" cannot even appreciate, no, make that tolerate, the beauty of the world's most popular sport?

Ain't it a durn shame that all of the best referees are on the sidelines of every game?

Ain't it a durn shame to see a league where 300 children wear 300 different uniforms, practice on 37 different teams, with 185 different soccer balls, at five different sites and play 281 different matches on 13 different Saturdays and utilize 41 different referees, AND the same four people organize, telephone, administrate, maintain the fields, quartermaster the equipment and quietly go home at the end of the season, while no one else volunteers to assist them?

Ain't it a durn shame that you can spend \$82 on an excellent pair of soccer shoes for your young'un, only to have them outgrow them before they wear them out?

Ain't it a durn shame to travel anywhere in any state, or any sport, and see leagues argue and bicker amongst themselves, where grown adults use children as pawns to settle some pre-conceived power struggles, where parents forget that the main purpose behind their children's participation is one of recreation and enjoyment, and where unity in the name of the game of sport is but an illogical, idealistic notion/fantasy?

Ain't it a durn shame to hear the parent's of an eight year old talk about training and preparing their child vigorously for a college career?

Ain't it a durn shame to see an 11 year old player step up and announce that they "play left wing" or "right back" and refuse the encouragement to play anywhere else on the pitch?

Ain't it a durn shame to see parents who enter their children in a sport to learn teamwork and sportsmanship, yet stand on the sidelines during matches and prove that it doesn't exist all around us? And to add insult to injury, when questioned later as to why they rode the refs so bad, reply: "They had it coming" or "They deserved it."

Ain't it a durn shame that occasionally a soccer player/team/parent will interfere with a softball game or practice played on an adjacent field, when it is painfully obvious that these people do not remember the struggle that pioneer soccer families endured from these reasonably cooperative sports, while WE tried to gain credibility and numbers, back in dem days?

Ain't it a durn shame that the NCAA lumped all collegiate sports together in their reform package, reducing the number of games, weeks of participation and disallowing collegiate players from playing the sport that they love outside of their collegiate season (including select and national teams)?

This article first appeared in Soccer magazine.

Never Ending Influence

By David Hillgrove

Occasionally I'm asked to speak or write to coaches and parents about the impact of adult leadership in their children's lives. I love the task and I love the topic. And usually you will hear me speaking on something close to my favorite slogan:

"A teacher affects eternity, for he never knows where his influence will end."

Very powerful stuff there. No matter what you do or what happens to the child and the sport, every child has you to thank (or curse) for being their very first coach; their coach of a championship season; their coach during "that year when we didn't win a game." You will forever hold a place in their experience(s).

Time and again, the lessons you teach --whether or not you intended to teach them -- will provide a roadmap for children in your charge to learn from. They will apply lessons learned in future situations, and in many cases you may find that your influence carries on for years and year. Sometimes it never ends, or at least, you can't tell where your influence becomes their notions. You are the first teacher of sport to help them with their "problem solving compass."

Not that this is any pressure or anything...!

A Child's Perspective in an Adult World

David P. Hillgrove

WHAT ABOUT ME?

What about me?

The father hugged his son, as they readied for his first game.

Shoes intact, uniform baggy, number proudly displayed.

The seven-year-old boys and girls were fresh and peppy that day. The parents encouraging and supportive. The coaches helped; the refs smiled. Few cared who won.

And it was good.

Several seasons passed. The game began to look like a soccer match, with players passing and dribbling and even the parents and fans beginning to know what they should be looking for. Sort of.

But the Team Mom wanted to give the boys soda for their post game drink; they wanted water because it tasted better.

And she complained that she felt that she wasn't doing enough for the team by just giving them water. So she brought soda. And wrapped each can up with little ribbons and name tags, with smiles and hearts all over it.

But the players didn't want all of that. They wanted water.

And the little boy asked, "What about me?"

Soon the boys and girls grew, and a special "select" team was formed. It was to travel afar, to sights as yet unknown, to play unnamed teams. It was to be good for all.

So the coach set up some tryouts. And he tested each for skills and for desire. He tried to make them fair so that all had a chance.

One little boy did not want to play. He only tried a little and did not run fast. He wanted to stop playing so he could read more, and draw pictures with his friends.

But his daddy said, "I will have none of that. No son of mine will sit around idly while other men's children play sports."

And the little boy asked, "What about me?"

The team was chosen. They played their games and they won a few. But they did not win enough to make some mommies happy.

Those "ladies" yelled at the coach and talked behind his back, because he let all of the boys play in every game.

He even gave them each a "start" because he had confidence in them.

But that did not matter, it seemed.

The boys loved their coach because he was so friendly and helpful.

But he was told to leave, by the parents.

And the boys asked, "What about us?"

The new coach hollered and screamed all of next season. Whenever the boys did one thing good, he wondered why they didn't do two. He called them names and taught them to hold jerseys and kick players in the shin.

But they won.

Sort of. They won games, anyway.

But the mean ole fat coach who had never played soccer, did not make it fun.

Not like before.

And the mommies said: "But we want to make sure that you win so that you have fun."

And the little boy asked, "What about me?"

Soon a rival league began to invite players to play on their select team. They called the parents at home and wrote them letters, and had all of them meet in one big room. The parents listened to these words and promises, and they talked among themselves. The moms and dads wondered if they would be as happy in the new league.

The old league leaders got angry and complained. Then they pleaded with the parents, and told them how bad it would look.

But no one asked the boys, even throughout all of the planning.

And the little boy asked, "What about me?"

The games went on, all across the land. Everywhere one could see, there were goals and nets and lined fields and practices. And boys practiced hard so that someday people would notice how good they are. And parents went to games, but not to cheer. They shouted and hollered at the opposing players, even at players on their own team. They cursed and kicked during the day, and discussed how good recreational sports were for children at night. They learned to yell at refs; and the boys learned too.

The high school rule makers and administrators all met in one big room one day. They smoked cigars and ate big sandwiches. They laughed and told jokes, and wrote some rules down. They talked about some of them, and wondered which people would disagree with their rule changes.

But they never called to speak with any coaches. Or parents. Or players.

And they all asked, "What about us?"

The young men became good; some played for one team, some played for another.

Soon their high school coach invited them to play on his team. They said, "That is good. Now we play for two teams. We will become better for this!"

And the coach said, "No, that would not be good for you. We must take care of you and teach you what is good for you."

And the young man thought awhile and asked, "What about me?"

The NCAA met in a city by a big river, where the music was good. They spoke with news reporters, and were seen on TV. And they passed rules that changed the college teams' seasons.

College soccer teams' seasons.
Because they had seen so many problems in football. And basketball. At big schools. With big programs.
So all the sports had to suffer.
And the teams asked, "What about us?"
The bells tolled and the birds chirped and a new day arose.
He earned his diploma and returned home.
He worked and married, but what he most liked was to coach.
Because he could work with the young, and teach them to try, and he learned a lot about himself.
He did not know who scored the most, or who was going to play the most. He laughed a lot. He had fun. They had fun.
And they liked him. And it was good.
This article first appeared in Soccer magazine.

<http://www.usysa.org/sidelines/>

REFEREES

Coaches Have No Excuse

Bobby Howe, USSF Director of Coaching

I would like to draw upon the spirit of goodwill that abounds at this time of year to discuss the Player/Coach/Referee relationship. Since the history of the officiated game, there have been differences of opinion among players, coaches and officials. In a sense, this is quite understandable because all parties observe the game from a different point of view. Perhaps, if they were to appreciate the other person's perspective of a soccer game, there would be better relationships.

Player Perspective

The game presents a series of motor and sensory challenges for the player. How do those challenges affect his/her behavior in the game?

Throughout the game the player has to adjust to the movement of the ball. At times, the player has to run with the ball. The player has to deal with the constant pressure of the opposition. The environment, importance of the game, the time of the game, winning and losing, making mistakes in the game and individual personality will affect the level of stress to which the player is subjected. Whatever the circumstances of the game, the player has to make very important decisions and maintain a very high level of concentration. It must be understood the players are playing to win the game, therefore, the game is very competitive: **THE HIGHER THE STANDARD OF PLAY, THE MORE COMPETITIVE THE GAME.**

While soccer is unlike rugby or football in its physical aspect, soccer is a **CONTACT SPORT**, although most of contact is incidental as a result of players challenging for the ball. All referees will be able to recite the specific rules which disallow certain types of contact. However, the key to their observation is the **INTENT OF THE CONTACT.**

Was the player going for the ball or the opponent? Did the player hit the opponent before the ball or did the opponent fall over the after correct challenge for the ball?

Despite its simplicity, the very nature of the game of soccer presents individual and group "battles" on the field which have to be won. Referees must understand that the player regards the game from one perspective - **THEY CANNOT BE IMPARTIAL.**

Coach Perspective

The coach's perspective is entirely different from the players and the referee. No matter what their personality is like, the coach cannot be impartial; the coaches observe the game for the advantage of their teams.

Soccer coaches must not fall into the trap of copying coaches of baseball, football and basketball, where it is almost accepted to be highly critical of officials during the game. In those traditional American sports the coaching staff plays a vital role in the outcome of the game while the game is being played. Therefore, emotions tend to run high. Soccer coaches can do very little to affect the outcome of the game while it is being played. **SOCCER IS A PLAYERS' GAME.** While emotions are undoubtedly affected, the coach is under no real pressure during the game: he/she does not have to **RUN, SWEAT, OR MAKE SPLIT SECOND DECISIONS AS DO THE PLAYERS AND THE REFEREE.**

THE COACH HAS NO EXCUSE FOR POOR BEHAVIOR. The following are points for consideration:

Coaches should recognize the importance of their behavior; harsh criticism of the referee by the coach during the game often gives license for the players and parents (spectators) also to criticize. Coaches should address referees respectfully, quietly, in a non-confrontational manner. Before each game, coaches should try to remind the players that the referee needs to concentrate and unnecessary talking (directed at the referee) tends to create less concentration on the the job of refereeing. Coaches should not approach the referee at halftime. This is the only time during the game that the coach has to talk to the players as a group. He should not waste this valuable time in talking to the referee.

Referee Considerations

As I have never refereed a game I do not feel qualified in providing a referee perspective. However, the following are considerations for referees based upon player and coach perspectives.

As I have asked referees to try to understand the demands of the players, equally, players must understand the demands of the referee:

They have a high level of concentration for the duration of the game in which they are making split second value judgements which may affect the outcome of the game. This is a tremendous responsibility. The referee is human. They will make mistakes. However, they will make fewer mistakes than most players on the field.

Referees should not become defensive when criticized nor should they intentionally try to antagonize the players or coaches. If players or coaches become abusive, the referee should deal with the situation efficiently and GET ON WITH THE GAME. Soccer is a simple game with simple rules. The difficulty that many referees encounter is that rules are BLACK and WHITE and soccer is a GREY game.

Therefore, common sense should be applied to the decision-making process.

GOOD REFEREEING IS BORN OUT OF COMMON SENSE. GREAT REFEREEING IS BORN OUT OF EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME + COMMON SENSE.

The very nature of the game presents different challenges and ever changing situations within a game. The nature of the game also dictates that one game will be entirely different from another. At this time, lack of experienced referees often dictates that most referees are asked to officiate different standards of play and both boys and girls games. Each game represents a different challenge. It is vital that the referee recognizes the standard and type of game and TAKES EVERY GAME SERIOUSLY.

Finally, coaches and referees must recognize that soccer is a players' game and not an arena for them to exhibit their egos. The best referees are those who are not remembered after the game because they have allowed the players to play.

The challenge of the game will inevitably lead to errors on the field. While players must be punished for foul play and abusive conduct, they may be forgiven for mistakes. While referees must be impartial and control the game in a non-officious manner, their mistakes in judgement can be understood and, therefore, forgiven.

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The "Silent Saturday" Experiment

Jim Sheldon

A coach watches as his team does every thing right ? until he breaks the silence

Following the well publicized lead of a league in suburban Cleveland, the youth league I coach in tried one of these "Silent Saturday" experiments last fall. You know. Coaches are prohibited from yelling anything from the touchline, other than "sub." Likewise, parents have to keep silent. No cheering allowed, be it positive or negative. The idea is to give the game back to the kids - let them make their own decisions on the field - and to eliminate verbal abuse of referees.

How'd it go? Let's set the scene first. It's an 8 a.m. kickoff. That's good, at least for me. I'm not very verbal at 8 a.m. on any Saturday.

We happen to be playing the undefeated, first-place team. I'm thinking that's bad. If there was ever a game in which my kids could use some extra instruction, this could be it. But, of course, I'm going to have to shut up.

So, we warm up. I give the kids a few pre-game instructions, pick the starting eight and send them out for the kickoff.

For the next 25 minutes, I'm stunned. We're playing the best we have all season. These are 8- and 9-year-olds playing the ball out of the back. No one is arguing over taking throw-ins. They know who is supposed to take the goal kicks and corners. There's an occasional beehive swarm around the ball, but not too bad.

At halftime, we're up 1-0 and I couldn't be happier. Then, I make a fatal error - I open my mouth. After the oranges are consumed, I get them together and go over three or four points of emphasis for the second half. I don't know if I confused them or they weren't listening, but we look like a different team in the second half.

Suddenly, no one seems to remember where he's playing. There's no attempt to pass. No patience on the ball. We're whiffing on shots and clearances. Basics have gone out the window along with anything resembling effort. When our keeper lets a slow roller go through his legs with five minutes to go, we're down 2-1.

We make one last push. Our best player gets knocked silly in the opponents' box. No call. I keep quiet, but one of the parents can't resist. It's the only time in four years of coaching this team that I've had a parent yell at a referee - on Silent Saturday, no less.

The game ends and I'm frustrated. We're now 1-4. We've been in every game, losing three of them by one goal and the other by two. But, the four losses are as many as these kids have had the previous three years combined.

I have to remind myself that these are third-graders. You're going to lose games when your keeper gets nutmegged. The kids are just beginning to get a feel for positioning and passing. They're still going to bunch up and want to dribble, which is OK. None of them appears frustrated. They still had fun.

With that in perspective, I reflect on Silent Saturday. I come up with three conclusions:

1. I'm not convinced that a single Silent Saturday solves the parental problem. For the overwhelming majority whose sideline encouragement is positive, I'm not sure they need to be quiet. If these kids keep playing into high school, they certainly are going to have to learn to deal with crowd noise - if, in fact, they hear anyone at all (me included). For the minority of parents whose behavior is inappropriate, I don't think keeping them quiet for one Saturday is going to be the cure. Can't hurt, though, I suppose.
2. Taking pressure off the referee is a good thing. The kids who ref in our league are typically 14- to 16-year-olds. These are kids trying to give something back to the game while also earning some spending money. The last thing they need is abuse from adults, most of whom don't know the rules anyway. No wonder so many of them quit officiating or, worse yet, leave soccer altogether.
3. Creating an atmosphere in which the kids can make their own decisions is absolutely brilliant. The essence of the game is players making the right decisions on the field. Let 'em play. And, at least for 25 minutes, we did very effectively. What more can you expect from U-10s? So, all in all, a worthwhile experiment. Then, one other conclusion comes to me. Keep halftimes silent, too.