

WAA Outdoor Recreational Soccer Rules

Updated 3/2022



Wheatland Athletic Association

2323 Liberty Street
Aurora, IL 60502
630-978-2855
www.waasports.org

GOAL SAFETY WARNING

Goals ***MUST NOT BE MOVED*** by players or coaches for any reason.

If the goals on your practice field or game field are not securely staked into the ground DO NOT PLAY on the field until the goals are secured.

Unsecured goals are very dangerous and can cause injury. Please report any unsecured goals to the W.A.A. office at 630-978-2855. Please do not allow children to hang on the nets or crossbars.

We appreciate your cooperation on this important matter.

Wheatland Athletic Association
Board of Directors

Firearms and Weapons of any kind are not permitted at any WAA **facility or event** including but not limited to practices, camps, clinics, meetings (of any kind or nature), games or tournaments (**collectively "Events"**). This policy is in place at all **buildings** and locations (**and adjacent parking and storage facilities**) that WAA owns, operates, maintains, rents, **is licensed or permitted to use and/or enjoy (collectively "Maintains")**, including but not limited to any facility, **property** or field that a WAA Event is held **or utilizes property that WAA Maintains**. A violation of this policy will result in immediate notification of police and removal of the violator from the event or facility. Notwithstanding, the WAA reserves its, sole and absolute, right to terminate the membership (or further restrict or prohibit) the attendance of any member, family or household member from an event or facility, or the participation therein of a minor child of a member or household violating any of its policies.

WHEATLAND ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

PHILOSOPHY

WAA's goal is to provide children with an opportunity to learn the basic skills of soccer in a safe and non-threatening environment. Our intent is for the children to have fun and learn to enjoy the game. Every child should walk off the field feeling like a winner. For this reason, winning will not be a major emphasis of our program and the WAA will not keep standings.

WAA Code of Conduct

Players

I will learn the rules of the sport and follow them to the best of my ability; I will respect my coach, be courteous, listen and perform to the best of my ability; I will respect my teammates and treat all other players the way I would like to be treated; I will respect my opponents.

I will respect the officials and let them do their job; I will compete fairly and demonstrate good sportsmanship no matter if my team wins or not; I will only use social media in a positive manner.

Coaches

I will be a positive role model for my team by learning and following the rules of the game/league, encouraging sportsmanlike conduct, showing respect, courtesy, and positive support of the players, officials, other coaches, and spectators at each game and practice; I will not engage in or encourage any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct; I will remember that children participate in sports to have fun and will work to organize practices that are fun and challenging to my players; I will treat each player as an individual and consider the large range of emotional and physical development for the age group; I will teach my players to respect the officials and I will respect the officials at all times; I will teach my team that doing one's best and working as a team, are the most important goals of youth sports; I will only use social media in a positive manner and encourage my players and parents to do the same; I will never physically, sexually, or verbally abuse any player, coach, official, or parent;

I will never be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while participating in a WAA event; I will never use tobacco products at any WAA event.

Parents

I will be a positive role model for my child and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials, parents, and spectators at every game and practice; I will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, parent or spectator; I will teach my child to play by the rules and follow the player's code of conduct.

I will teach my child that doing one's best and working as a team is more important than winning; I will only use social media in a positive manner and encourage my child to do the same; I will inform the coach of any physical limitations that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others; I will refrain from coaching my child or other players during the games and practices, unless I am the team coach;

I will demand a sports environment for my child and other children that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and will refrain from their use before and at all sports events.

We urge everyone to help keep the fields neat and clean. Please respect residential property when using or visiting fields. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on park and school property at any WAA games.

SOCCKER RULES

Spring 2022

Field of Play

- 1st through 5th grade teams will play on medium fields (45 x 60).
- The middle school division (6th through 8th grade) will play on 50x80 fields.
- Our fields are preset. The nets should be checked before each game. Any dangerous condition should be corrected immediately if possible. Please notify the WAA Office of any conditions you think require attention.
- WAA reserves the right to change program parameters based on number of registrations in order to provide a balanced program.

Grade	# on Field	Maximum Field Size	Roster Recommended Size	Roster Max. Size	Goal Size
1 st	7 v 7	45 x 60	10	12	6' x 12'
2 nd	7 v 7	45 x 60	10	12	6' x 12'
3 rd	7 v 7	45 x 60	10	12	6'6" x 18'6"
3 rd 4 th	7 v 7	45 x 60	11	12	6'6" x 18'6"
4 th 5 th	8 v 8	45 x 60	11	12	6'6" x 18'6"
6 th -8 th	9 v 9	50 x 80	12	13	6'6" x 18'6"

Game Cancellations

Weather Related Cancellations --- WAA will cancel games if lightning is observed or the directors consider weather conditions to be extreme. Please check the WAA website/Rainout Line for any weather related field cancellations at www.waasports.org

Equipment

- *The ball*
 - 1st and 2nd grade divisions use a size 3 ball.
 - 3rd through 5th grade divisions use a size 4 ball.
 - Middle school (6th through 8th grade) divisions use a size 5 ball.

If a ball should become unplayable, it should be replaced by a new ball approved by the referee and the match should be restarted with a drop ball at the point nearest to where the ball was when play stopped. If this occurred during a stoppage of the game (i.e. place-kick, penalty kick, corner kick, or throw-in) the game should be restarted accordingly.

- *Player's Equipment*
 - Gym shorts with NO POCKETS OR BELT LOOPS and (1) WAA Green (Away) and (1) WAA Yellow (Home) jersey comprise a player's uniform. Shirt, shorts, and socks available for purchase at the WAA office.
 - **Shin guards are mandatory and must be worn under socks. No shin guards = No Play.**
 - Sweatshirts and pants and soft knit caps, ear wraps, and gloves are permitted for cold weather. NO POCKETS OR BELT LOOPS on pants.
 - Molded cleat shoes that conform to the laws of soccer, or gym shoes, are permitted (no baseball shoes or shoes with toe cleats will be permitted.)

- The goalkeeper must wear **colors that distinguish** him/her from the other players and the referee. WAA provides goalkeeper jerseys in the coach equipment bag.

The player shall not wear anything that is dangerous to themselves or another player. Jewelry is not permitted to be worn, with the following exceptions:

- Earrings: If the earrings cannot be removed then they must be completely covered with either Band-Aids or tape. If they become uncovered during the course of play the player must be removed from the game and may not re-enter until they have properly re-covered them.
- Medical Bracelet or Chain: The bracelet or chain must be taped down to the body so it is not loose.
- Eyeglasses are allowed, however for the safety of the players, shatterproof sport goggles are strongly recommended.
- No metal cleat shoes or street shoes are permitted.
- **The referee will not allow a player to play in jeans or pants with belt loops or pockets. This is for the safety of all players.**
- Casts are permitted if padded in a fashion so as to be safe for all players. Padding must be approved by the referee.
- If a player's uniform does not comply with WAA's policies, they shall not be allowed to play until the discrepancy is corrected.

Officials

• Coaches

1. Practices -- Coaches should have at least one practice a week no longer than 1.5 hours, in addition to any Rec+ practices run by the Team Chicago/WAA Coach. Coaches should not exceed two practices a week. We do not recommend practices for Kindergarten.
2. Games -- Coaching during a game should be "positive encouragement" in a constructive manner. **Negative statements to own team or opposing team will not be allowed. See Harassment & Swearing Rule**
3. **No one is to coach from outside the coach's box**, which is usually within the 25 yard line to the 50 yard line. Do not have a coach or parent down by the goalkeeper, or behind the goal, coaching the goalkeeper and other players on the team. **The referee will ask you to have this person move from behind the goal and remain silent.** If this "coaching" continues the person will be asked to leave and if they refuse to leave the game will be a forfeit.
4. **Only WAA coaches (maximum of 3 at one time) will be allowed on the sideline** with the team. All other parents are to sit on the **opposite** sideline.

• Referees

Referees have jurisdiction over each game. **A referee's word is final.** Questions of the referee may be made in a polite manner and away from players during a game stoppage, at half time or at the end of the game. It is the referee's responsibility to:

1. Enforce the rules
 - a. Referees must control the physicality of the game by calling fouls when they occur, especially if player safety is at risk. **REFEREES ARE REQUIRED TO SHOW AND TELL THE PLAYER WHAT IS BEING CALLED (pushing, tripping, slide tackle from behind).** If a player continues to foul repeatedly after being told to stop/shown what is wrong, the referee is required to (in order to keep other players safe) send the offending player off the field. The coach may send a substitute player onto the field. The referee must talk with the coach to decide whether the offending player will be allowed to return to the field or stay on the team sideline.

b. **Referees must send off the field** (send player to team sideline), any player who is **guilty of violent conduct, serious foul play, or the use of foul or abusive language**. The coach may send a substitute player onto the field. The referee must talk with the coach to decide whether the offending player will be allowed to return to the field or stay on the team sideline.

c. Referees are obligated to report any misconduct of **coaches** or **spectators** to the Referee coordinator, but when dealing with these individuals, yellow and red **cards must not be used**. **The individual should be informed that he may be required to completely leave the premises if the misconduct persists. The referee has the authority and responsibility to terminate the game should the individual refuse to leave the field.** If a coach or spectator is told to leave the field they will be suspended from **at least** the following game and the incident will be reviewed by the Soccer Directors.

2. Keep time.

3. Stop play for serious injury.

a. If, in the opinion of the referee, a player has been seriously injured, play shall be immediately stopped. Safety of the players is our main concern. **Signs of serious injury include screaming, crying, or prolonged inability to walk.** Play is restarted with a drop ball, at the place where the ball was, when play suspended.

b. If a player is slightly injured, the game shall not be stopped until the ball has ceased to be in play or has been played to a neutral position. Play to be restarted accordingly for reason of stoppage (i.e., goal kick, throw-in, corner-kick, or drop ball.)

Rules of the Game

- **Number of Players**

Games shall be played by two teams. The Soccer Directors will determine the number of players on the field for each division.

Teams must have at least 2 fewer than required players to begin the game and one player must be a goalkeeper. If a team does not have the required number of players, it would be **permissible to use players from the opposing team to fill in**. If this cannot be done, the game should be rescheduled. Our purpose is for the kids to have a good learning experience, so make every effort to play the game as scheduled.

- **Duration of the Game**

1st grade - 3rd grade divisions: play 4 – 10-minute quarters 2 minutes between quarters with a 5-minute half-time.

4th/ 5th grade divisions: play 4 – 10-minute quarters 2 minutes between quarters with a 5-minute half-time.

Middle school (6th through 8th grade) divisions: play 4 – 12-minute quarters 2 minutes between quarters with a 5-minute half-time.

Half-time in all divisions is not to exceed 5 minutes. **All games will begin on time as scheduled.**

Have your team warmed up and starting line-up set prior to your game time as the referees will start the game clock at your assigned game time. Referees will not provide extra time to warm-up and get your starting line-up set. If a game is running late, time will be made up by taking an even number of minutes off each quarter.

1st- 3rd , 3rd/4th grade divisions

- Unlimited substitution will be allowed.
- All players will start at least one game during the season. There will be no unwritten rule of which players are “starters” and “non-starters”.
- All players will get equal playing time as much as possible every game or at least equal playing time throughout the season. If, however, a player consistently misses practices or is otherwise

uncooperative, the coach may limit that player to playing 1/2 a game or 20 minutes of cumulative play.

- Unlimited substitution will be allowed.
- Substitution can occur at quarter time, for injuries (1 for 1 substitutions for both teams), or the following dead-ball situations:
 - Your possession for a throw-in
 - Any goal-kick
 - Before a kick-off
- Substitution will not be allowed any other time and is always at the discretion of the referee. The substitution may not be made until indicated by the referee. There are no time-outs.
- The referee may stop the clock for extended injuries, lost balls, etc. Time will be extended for a penalty-kick if the time has run out.
- Unless injured, every player will play three quarters before any player plays four quarters in a game.
- **Players shall be rotated so as to play each position during the season.**
- **Per the United States Soccer Federation directive no heading will be allowed. If a player deliberately heads the ball the referee shall award the opposing team an in-direct free-kick.**

4th/5th- 8th grade divisions

- Unlimited substitution will be allowed.
- All players will start at least one game during the season. There will be no unwritten rule of which players are “starters” and “non-starters”.
- All players will get equal playing time as much as possible every game or at least equal playing time throughout the season. If, however, a player consistently misses practices or is otherwise uncooperative, the coach may limit that player to playing 1/2 a game or 20 minutes of cumulative play.
- Substitution can only occur at quarter time, for injuries (1 for 1 substitutions for both teams), or the following dead-ball situations:
 - Your possession for a throw-in
 - Any goal-kick
 - Before a kick-off
- Substitution will not be allowed any other time and is always at the discretion of the referee. The substitution may not be made until indicated by the referee. There are no time-outs.
- The referee may stop the clock for extended injuries, lost balls, etc. Time will be extended for a penalty-kick if the time has run out.

• Start of Play

The game begins with the home team (Yellow) kicking off. The away team (Green) will choose the goal they want to defend first. At least one player from the team kicking off stands at mid-field in the center circle. All other players must remain in their half of the field, and no opposing player may be within the center circle until the ball has been touched by the player kicking off. Infractions require the kick to be retaken and the offender warned.

The kicker may not play the ball again until it is touched by another player. When restarting play from causes other than those just mentioned or those mentioned elsewhere in the laws, and providing the ball has not passed over the side-line, end-line, or goal-line, the referee drops the ball at the place where it was when play was suspended, and it is in play when it touches the ground.

Kick-offs may go backwards.

A goal may be scored directly from a kick-off.

- **Ball in and Out of Play**

The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal-line, end-line, or side-line, whether on the ground or in the air, and when the game is stopped by the referee. The ball is in play at all other times.

- **Method of Scoring**

A goal is scored when the whole ball has passed over the goal-line, between the goal posts and under the crossbar provided it has not been thrown, carried, or propelled deliberately by hand or arm of a player on the attacking team.

It is WAA policy that the score is not to be kept by the referee, and standings are not recorded.

It is the responsibility of the referee to remind coaches of WAA's 3-goal-lead policy, and to report continued infractions to the WAA Office.

- **Off-side**

A player is off-side if he/she is nearer his opponent's goal-line than the ball at the moment the ball is played unless:

1. He is in his own half of the field
2. At least 2 opponents (including the goalkeeper) are either nearer their own goal line than he is or even with him.
3. He receives the ball directly from:
 - a. A goal-kick
 - b. A corner-kick
 - c. A throw-in
 - d. A drop ball

A player is off-side if less than two defensive players are either between or even with that player and the defending goal-line when the ball is last played.

The penalty for being off-side is an in-direct free-kick by a player of the opposing team from the place where the infringement occurred.

Even though a player may be technically in an off-side position, the penalty is not called unless, in the opinion of the referee, the player is interfering with the play or with an opponent, or is seeking to gain an advantage by being offside.

Off-side is not enforced for 1st grade, 2nd grade, and 3rd grade divisions.

For more information on "off-side" go to

<http://www.dynamic-thought.com/Offsideclickette.html>

- **Restarts**

- **Free-Kicks**

There are two types of free kicks.

1. Direct (from which a goal can be scored).
2. In-direct (from which a goal cannot be scored unless the ball has been played or touched by another player other than the kicker before it passes through the goal)

A free-kick is awarded when an offense is committed. Ball must be stationary and placed where the foul occurred.

When a player is taking a free-kick inside their own penalty area, players must be at least 10 yards from the ball. Ball must leave the penalty area before it is in play or kick will have to be retaken.

When a player is taking a free-kick outside of his penalty area, players must be at least 10 yards from the ball unless this brings them behind their own goal line between the goal posts.

The ball is in play once it has been touched and moved forward and cannot be played again by the kicker until it has been touched by another player.

- **Penalty Kick**

If a defending player is within his own penalty area when he commits any one of the 9 offenses that result in the awarding of a direct kick (see “G” Fouls and Misconduct), the opposing team is awarded a penalty kick.

All players except the kicker and the goalkeeper must clear the penalty area, and be at least 10 yards from the ball when it is kicked.

The goalkeeper must remain with both feet on the goal line and may move side to side but not forward, until the ball is kicked. The kicker must propel the ball forward and cannot touch the ball again until it is touched by another player.

A penalty kick should not be awarded for unintentional hand contact with the ball in the penalty area.

- **Throw-in**

The ball is thrown in within 1 yard from the point where it left the playing field by a player of the opposing team that last touched the ball. The player must face the field and use both hands equally to deliver the ball straight over the head, while keeping both of his feet on or outside the touchline.

The thrower cannot again play the ball until it has been touched by another player. A goal may not be scored directly from a throw-in. Opposing players are not allowed to dance about to try to impose on a throw in. If a foul throw occurs, some indication from the referee should be made as to why the throw-in does not conform, and the ball is given to the other team.

In 1st grade or 2nd grade division, if a foul throw-in occurs, the referee shall instruct the player how to properly throw-in the ball and allow a second attempt by the same player. If a second foul throw occurs, the ball shall be given to the other team.

- **Goal-Kick**

A goal-kick is awarded to the defending team when the ball is put out of bounds completely over the goal-line, and not between the goal posts, by the attacking team.

- The ball is in play once the kick is taken; it can be played before leaving the penalty area
- Opponents must remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play

- **Corner-Kick**

A corner-kick is awarded to the attacking team when the whole of the ball is put out-of-bounds by the defending team over their goal-line (excluding the portion between the goal posts).

The ball is kicked from the quarter circle (corner area) at the nearest corner flag post, which must not be moved.

Opposing players must remain at least 10 yards from the ball until it has been struck by the kicker.

The kicker may not play the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player.

- **Fouls and Misconduct**

- **Direct Kick** – A player who intentionally commits any of the following offenses shall be penalized by awarding the opposing team a direct free kick from the place where the offense occurred.
 1. Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent
 2. Tripping an opponent
 3. Jumping at an opponent
 4. Charging an opponent in a violent or dangerous manner
 5. Charging from behind
 6. Striking or attempting to strike an opponent
 7. Holding an opponent
 8. Pushing an opponent
 9. Deliberately carrying, striking, or propelling the ball with the hands or arms. Should a defending player commit one of these offenses within their penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded to the opposing team. A hand-ball should only be called when a player makes an attempt to control the direction of the ball with the hands or arms. Hand to ball – call, ball to hand – no call.
- **In-direct Kick** – A player committing any of the following offenses shall be penalized by awarding an in-direct kick to the opposing sides from the place where the offense occurred.
 1. Dangerous play (high kick, playing ball while on the ground)
 2. Kicking the ball in possession of the goalkeeper
 3. Illegal charging when the ball is not within playing distance
 4. Intentionally obstructing an opponent
 5. Charging the goalkeeper
 6. Goalkeeper offenses
 - a. Handling the ball for more than 6 seconds
 - b. Cannot pick up ball if passed back by his teammate
 - c. Touches the ball with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not been touched by another player.
 - d. Touches the ball with his hands after it has been received directly from a throw-in by his own teammate
 7. Misconduct
 8. Off-side
 9. Ball played by kicker after:
 - a. Kick-off
 - b. Penalty kick
 - c. Free-kick
 - d. Goal-kick
 - e. Corner-kick
 - f. By thrower after throw-in
 - g. By goalkeeper after putting ball into play
- **Red and Yellow Cards** – A player must play the ball, not the other players. The referee will determine whether play is fair or foul.
 1. A player shall be cautioned (yellow card) if:
 - a. He enters, re-enters, or leaves the field without referee's permission
 - b. Persistently infringes the laws
 - c. Shows by word or action dissent from a referee's decision
 - d. Guilty of un-gentlemanly conduct
 2. A player is sent off the field (red card) if:
 - a. He is guilty of violent conduct or serious foul play

- b. Persists in misconduct after a yellow card
 - c. Uses foul or abusive language - Zero tolerance; to include a 1 game suspension
- 3. A player will be given the following penalties for harassment of referees:
 - a. First issue – Verbal warning
 - b. Second issue – Yellow card
 - c. Third issue – Red card and 1 game suspension

If play is stopped when a player is ordered off the field, the game is resumed by an in-direct free kick awarded to the opposing team from the place where the infringement occurred.

Yellow and red cards will be awarded at the discretion of the referee. A red results in ejection and a one game suspension. The referee should report any cards he gives out to the Referee Coordinator. The coach of any player who receives a RED card **MUST** notify the WAA Office.

Spectators and Coaches are also subject to the “Laws of the Game,” and Harassment & Swearing Rule. The referees are obliged to report any misconduct by spectators and coaches, but when dealing with these individuals, yellow and red cards must not be used. The individual should be informed that he may be required to leave the field if the misconduct persists.

A player who receives a red card and is ordered off the field after play has started may not be replaced and his team must complete the match playing shorthanded. The Referee Coordinator and the Soccer Sport Director shall determine if the suspension shall last 1 or 2 games based upon the infraction.

- **Harassment of Referees by Coach or Parent**
 - 1. First issue of referee harassment will result in a verbal warning to the Head Coach, regardless if it was a parent or one of their team staff.
 - 2. Second issue will result in the Head Coach and the parent/staff member being required to leave the game immediately.
 - 3. If a parent/staff member has a recurring problem harassing officials, they will be suspended for an undetermined length of time.
- **Swearing, Foul or Abusive Language by Coaches or Parents**
 - 1. Zero tolerance - First issue by a coach or parent will result in leaving the field immediately and a 1 game suspension.
 - 2. The head coach is responsible for his parents and his staff.

Additional WAA Amendments

- The goalkeeper has possession of the ball when one or either hands or arms are holding the ball. Possession is also a hand, finger, arm, or leg on a stationary ball brought under control. Goalkeepers in possession of the ball cannot be charged, obstructed or interfered with by opposing players. **WAA EMPHASIZES SAFETY OF THE GOALKEEPERS AND REFEREES ARE INSTRUCTED TO ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION AS IT RELATES TO A GOALKEEPER HAVING POSSESSION OF THE BALL.** Violators will be yellow carded on the first infraction and appropriately red carded and ejected on a subsequent infraction.
- **Slide tackling is not permitted.** A tackle from directly behind the opponent or with both feet will not be allowed.

- Cherry-picking (goal scrounging) is not permitted in the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Grade Divisions. Cherry-picking is when an offensive player remains near an opposing team's goal when the ball is being played on the other half of the field. Since off-side is not enforced for 1st through 3rd grade divisions, please do not have any offensive player purposely stay in an off-side position. Referees are instructed to stop play and disallow any goal that results from this type of tactic.
- **All players and coaches must remain within their respective team areas (coaches' box) during play.** The home team (green) will occupy the area left of the halfway-line, and the visiting team (yellow) will occupy the area to the right of the halfway-line.
- Spectators should occupy the opposite side of the field from the teams and must be at least 6 feet back from the sidelines to allow the linesman to cover the field.
- No spectators or coaches are permitted to occupy the area behind either goal-line, including behind or near the goal.
- Girls may use their arms for protection while doing chest traps. Hands should be on shoulders, and elbows must be kept down.
- If a ball is put out-of-bounds over the goal-line (excluding the area between the goal posts) and the referee is unable to determine which team last touched the ball, a goal-kick in lieu of a corner-kick shall be awarded.
A corner-kick is considered a direct scoring advantage and should not be awarded in this situation. Awarding of a goal-kick to the defending team is not considered a scoring advantage.
- Soccer *IS* a contact sport. The players must play the ball and not the other players; however, unintentional contact does occur. Blowing the whistle for every minor infraction disrupts the flow of the game. In youth soccer, a referee's primary objective is to insure that the game is played in a safe and instructional manner. **Offering words of support and instruction is advised.**
- **WAA recommends that coaches meet with the official prior to the game and discuss how to handle a lopsided game. In the event a team takes a three goal lead, one of the solutions should be agreed upon prior to the start of the game to occur for the duration of the three goal imbalance:**
 1. The team behind adds a player to the field.
 2. The team ahead should position its scoring player(s) in a defensive position (i.e. fullback, goalkeeper).

Special Needs Children in the Recreational Soccer Program

It is the philosophy of Wheatland Athletic Association to progressively develop children's skills by offering programs for various age levels. As they develop, the children are taught the value of good sportsmanship and teamwork. Our intent is for children to have FUN and to enjoy the sport they play while learning the character building lessons that come from participating in team sports.

WAA has children participating at all ability levels, including some children with special needs. Our goal is to create a fun and safe environment for all of the children on the team as well as to teach that all people are the same. We want to encourage a positive environment for all the children on the team.

On the waiver portion of the registration form, WAA asks for parents to note any limitations that their child may have and to communicate these limitations to the coach. This does not always happen so it is important that coaches evaluate and determine the child's level of disability and discuss any concerns with the family.

For all grade levels, we want to try a Buddy system for the teams with special needs children. This system was instituted in the 2009 baseball season for recreational players and worked well. Coaches should talk prior to the start of the game and agree that the "Buddy system" will be used for 2 quarters of the game. Preferably the special needs child will play one quarter each half.

WAA asks that one player be assigned to the same position as the child with special needs. The buddy should be rotated so that no one teammate has to be a buddy more than any other. The buddies should have a chance to play at least one half the game without a buddy. The team with the special needs child will be allowed to have an additional player on the field during the 2 quarters of "buddy system" play. We do not want the Buddy to be making plays; they are there to encourage and keep the child focused on the game. If the special needs child becomes difficult or poses a safety threat to him or herself or anyone on the team, they should not be allowed on the field. If needed, the special needs child's parent or guardian can be the Buddy. The best situation, however, is to have a teammate be the Buddy. Parents of special needs players are encouraged to assistant coach on their team in order to assist with the Buddy program as well as their child. Under certain circumstances, parents/guardians may be required to be present at practices and games.

We do want to encourage the rules of the game be followed, so the child does need to follow the rules for fouls, throw ins, penalty kicks, etc. What we are trying to do is foster knowledge of the game, team work and create a positive experience for the child.

Remember, this is a recreational league and we want it to be more about fun than about winning. The experiences of helping a teammate will last well beyond the memory of who won or lost. Parents of special needs children have told us that little things like what we are trying to do above make a world of difference to them and their children.