



## **Coaches Handbook**

# **South Park Soccer Association**

### **In-House (Rec) Soccer Program**

**"The South Park In-House Soccer Program is built on the foundation of fun and good sportsmanship in soccer. Players will learn the basics of soccer as well as learn what it is like to be part of a team."**

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## Letter to Coaches

Dear Volunteer Coach,

The SPSA welcomes you and your child to the in-house soccer program! A goal of the SPSA is for all youth sports participants, parents and children, to have an enjoyable sporting experience. The SPSA uses soccer as a tool to develop each participant physically, mentally, and spiritually. Our programs emphasize teaching the values of good sportsmanship, teamwork, goal setting, and skill development in a fun, esteem-promoting atmosphere. Our participants will learn the fundamentals while learning the rules of the sport.

Thank you for volunteering your time to coach soccer with the SPSA! By volunteering, you are clearly aware of how important your role is to the children in these programs. The SPSA is volunteer-driven, and without you, the SPSA would not be possible.

It is our goal to provide a safe and fun program for all. Achieving this goal begins with ensuring all our volunteers are adequately screened and prepared for the season.

Thank you in advance for taking the time and volunteering.

Thank you, and enjoy the season!

Sincerely,  
SPSA Board of Directors

## Introduction

This handbook has been designed to help guide coaches during a typical soccer season at the SPSA. It does not answer every question or resolve every issue that may arise, but coaches are encouraged to use it as a guideline throughout the season.

The SPSA will communicate primarily with coaches via email. During periods of inclement weather, it is advised that coaches regularly check the email address which is listed with the league.

Coaches are asked to handle disputes quietly and allow the board to help with unruly parents and spectators. Coaches will be held responsible for unruly actions and/or the misconduct of their players, parents, and unruly spectators. A coach shall not verbally abuse or demean a player for any reason. Coaches will ensure that players, parents, and spectators follow the rules of the SPSA.

The SPSA welcomes coach suggestions for improving the league, the soccer experience for our children, and items to include in future versions of the Coaches' Handbook. If you would like to make suggestions regarding the league or the handbook, please send comments to [southparksoccer@gmail.com](mailto:southparksoccer@gmail.com).

## SPSA Philosophy

This SPSA in-house soccer program provides children of all ages and skill levels the opportunity to learn the game of soccer in a positive, fun, and friendly environment. Children from local communities are invited to come and play soccer in this recreation-style program. The in-house soccer season is broken up into two seasons, Fall and Spring, and offers soccer for various age

groups ranging from under 5 (U5) through the under 15 (U15) age group.

## **Registration Overview**

Registration covers both sessions, but it is possible to register for the Spring session only. In-house soccer season usually begins in September for the Fall and April for the Spring. Games are played on Saturdays at Evans' Field and South Park Eagle Stadium in South Park Township. Registration for these sessions usually occurs between June and July or the Fall and January and February for the Spring.

## **Practice Guidelines**

As a volunteer coach for in-house soccer, you will hold one practice a week. You will pick your own practice day and time slot. Most practices will occur at the South Park Middle School. Some exceptions are made; your practice location may be at Evan's Field. All teams must practice at an approved SPSA field. Make sure to take plenty of water breaks on very hot days. Don't forget to take water breaks during cold weather too. Proper hydration is very important for all athletes.

Planning is the key to having successful practices. Your practice planning should begin before you first get together with your team and should continue throughout the season as you plan for each practice. The SPSA will provide you with soccer curriculum-based materials and other training materials to help you plan a successful practice.

## **Uniforms**

Team uniform kits are provided by the SPSA and need to be worn for all games. These uniforms kits are part of the player's initial registration cost. A uniform kit consist of a team colored jersey, black shorts, and socks. The SPSA will provide you with the uniforms to distribute. Please remember that shin guards are required and must be covered by socks for all games and practices. These must be purchased separately by the parent/guardian. Spikes are allowed but not required. Football or baseball spikes (those having a spike at the toe) are not allowed.

## **Age Group Registration**

Unlike many sports that operate on a school year system, US Youth Soccer uses a player's birth year to determine the player's soccer age (U8, U10, etc.). A birth year is January 1 to December 31 the year in which they were born.

## **Season Timeline**

- Coaches Meeting: Mid-August for Fall Season. Mid-March. for Spring season
- Team Roster and Parents/Player Contact – Rosters will be sent to coaches and parents in mid-August. Coaches shall contact players within 5 days of receiving the team roster. Rosters for the Spring season will be the same as the Fall but may have additional registrants added.
- Practices: Teams may begin practicing 2 weeks prior to the first scheduled game
- Games: Each season is an 8-week season. Generally, September through October and

April through May.

- Picture Day: This occurs in the Spring season.
- Rain Outs & Make-up Games: These games will be rescheduled by the SPSA. Generally, we do not reschedule or make up the first cancelation of each season.
- End of Season: U8, U10, and U12 participate in our in-house spring tournament. Coaches will pick up end-of-year gifts prior to the start of each team's last game and complete a player evaluation form on each of their assigned players.
- [Spring In-House Tournament Playing Short Guidelines](#)
- [Spring In-House Tournament & Championship Days – Game Lengths and Tie Breakers](#)

## League Administration

### SPSA Board of Directors (League Administration)

The SPSA Board of Directors oversees of the administration of the SPSA In-House Soccer Program.

If you are interested in joining the SPSA Board, please contact any board member or send an email to [southparksoccer@gmail.com](mailto:southparksoccer@gmail.com).

Position	Board Member	Email Address
President	Andy Jackson	ahjackson13@gmail.com
Vice President	Matt Hindes	mhindes333@gmail.com
Secretary	Sara Bellisario	bellisara07@gmail.com
Treasurer	Jason Rakip	jayman129@gmail.com
Registrar	Ben Radio	radio.benjamin@gmail.com
Coach and Player Development	Laura Boehm	lb8412@gmail.com
Girls' Travel Commissioner	Vacant	Vacant
Boys' Travel Commissioner	Lire Jackson	jacksonlire@gmail.com
U5/U6 In-house Commissioner	Meaghan Novakovich	megk329@gmail.com
U8 In-house Commissioner	Charles Schwabenbauer	schwabenbauer.charles@gmail.com
U10 In-house Commissioner	Erin Quinn	Eboyts@yahoo.com
U12/U15 In-house Commissioner	Dana Gump	danagump@yahoo.com
Field and Structures Commissioner	Mike Roth	Mjroth38@gmail.com

Player Purchasing Commissioner	Rachel Recker	rachel.recker@outlook.com
Concession Stand Commissioner	Hannah Schildkamp	hannahschildkamp@gmail.com
In-House/Travel Referee Commissioner	Craig Amstone	craig.amstone@gmail.com
Special Projects Coordinator	Duane Tabak	dtabak428@gmail.com

**Web Address:** www.southparksoccer.com

**Email Address:** southparksoccer@gmail.com

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/people/South-Park-Soccer-Association/100036159624138/>

**Postal Address:** South Park Soccer Association  
2560 Brownsville Road  
Box 48  
South Park, PA, 15129

**Field Address:** South Park Soccer Association  
2700 Triphammer Road  
South Park Township, PA 15129

### **Coaching Requirements:** Required Clearances, Documents and Training

- 1.) Child Abuse Certification (PA Dept. of Human Services) (Good for a 5-year period)
- 2.) Criminal History Record Certification (Pennsylvania State Police) (Good for 5-year period)
- 3.) 3A Notarized Affidavit for Volunteer Exemption or 3B Federal Criminal History Certification (FBI Report) (Good for 5-year period 3A or 3B)
- 4.) SafeSport Trained (US Center for SafeSport) (Initial training and yearly refresher)
- 5.) US Soccer Grassroots Coaching License (US Soccer Learning Center) (Initial and ongoing)

**Please complete the process below to ensure that you have the proper clearances, documents and training!**

All background checks must be completed using the provider designated by Pennsylvania per the requirements of the State law. Individuals fall into two categories, paid and volunteer, and each has its own set of required clearances. SPSA coaches are unpaid volunteer positions and need to complete the following steps. *All individuals must upload the required documents into the PA West Soccer Online Risk Management System (link to the portal and additional info at the bottom of the page).*

### **How to Obtain Your Background Checks:**

Part 1: PA State Police Report

PA State Police Criminal Record Checks can be obtained online by visiting the State Police website - [Click Here](#).

Part 2: Child Abuse History Report - PA Child Abuse History Clearances may be made online - [Click Here](#). Results may be immediate or can take 7-14 business days to complete. If results are immediate you may need to log back into the system - retain your username and password for this. The Clearance Hotline is 877-371-5422.

If you have been a PA resident for 10 years or more:

Part 3a: Volunteer Qualification Affidavit (PDF): [Click Here](#). This document must be notarized. There is a fee for the notarization service that the SPSA will reimburse you for if you request.

Or, if you have been a PA resident for less than 10 years:

Part 3b: FBI Criminal Background Check. To request an FBI Fingerprint Clearance, you must first register. [Click Here](#). \*You will need the following organization code to register for any appointment through IdentoGO: 1KG6ZJ. There is a fee for the FBI Criminal Background Check. The SPSA will reimburse you for this upon your request.

Once you have completed parts 1, 2, and 3a or 3b, the resulting documents need to be provided to PA West:

## How to Receive PA-West Approval: PA West Soccer Online Risk Management System

All PA-West Soccer coaches, referees, and volunteers are required to comply with the Child Protective Services law. Please upload the copies of the documents you receives after completing parts 1-3 from above into your risk management record through the following URL/link only: [PA West Soccer Online Risk Management System](#). Using this system, you'll create an application and upload your documents into your admin record. You'll use your current PA-West login if you have an account in our online registration system; if you don't have an account, you'll need to create one.

PA West Soccer [Criminal Background Check Policy](#)

PA West Soccer [Zero Tolerance Risk Management Policy](#)

If you need assistance or have questions, please contact the PA West Soccer State Office via email at [stateoffice@pawest-soccer.org](mailto:stateoffice@pawest-soccer.org) or by phone at 412-856-8011 or the South Park Soccer Association at [southparksoccer@gmail.com](mailto:southparksoccer@gmail.com).

## SafeSport Training

Part 4: US Soccer and PA-West Soccer require that all coaches complete an online SafeSport training course. The course content includes recognizing child abuse, reporting child abuse, hazing, bullying, and the reporting process. This course is mandated by Federal Law. *The SafeSport training certificate is only valid for 1 year.* Each coach/manager must take the refresher course if their certificate expires before the end of November BEFORE they can be officially rostered on a team. The refresher course is only about 20 minutes and can be accessed through the SafeSport website by clicking here [SafeSport](#), and logging into the site with your existing login information.

If you need to create a SafeSport account and complete the full/initial training please use the following hyperlink: [SafeSport](#) and use the following Access Key: YC3E-6P5G-YYIL-CS2M.

*Please note that the SafeSport training certificate does not need to be uploaded to the PA-West risk management system. However, please provide a copy of the completion certificate and yearly refresher certificate to the SPSA age group commissioner you are working with or the SPSA at [southparksoccer@gmail.com](mailto:southparksoccer@gmail.com).*

## Coaching Licenses

Part 5: US Soccer now provides a grassroots coaching initiative that provides education for all US soccer coaches. All in-house level coaches must complete an online class for the play format that they are coaching in i.e., U5/U6/U8 4v4 model, U10 7v7 model, U12 9v9 model, and U13 and above 11v11 model. To sign up to take one of the classes the coach must sign up for an account on the [digital learning center](#). They must first take the free 20-minute online [Introductory Module](#). The SPSA will also reimburse the coach for the price of each online or in-person class they take upon request.

*Please note that the coaching license does not need to be uploaded to the PA-West risk management system. However, please provide a copy of the license issued by US Soccer to the SPSA age group commissioner you are working with or the SPSA at [southparksoccer@gmail.com](mailto:southparksoccer@gmail.com)*

## League Rules: Players Equipment, General Guidelines, Age Group Specific Rules, General Laws Of The Game

The SPSA operates as its own 501c3 Non-Profit Organization. However, we are supported by South Park Township and utilize Township and School District property for our programming. Please make yourself aware of any local ordinances, rules, or laws. The SPSA prohibits pets, firearms, or alcoholic beverages at any SPSA-sponsored events. Please advise your parents of these rules.

The SPSA uses modified rules of play for its recreational soccer environment. The following rules and guidelines are required to be followed by all coaches, players, and referees.

## Players Equipment

- All players are required to wear shin guards under their socks during all practices and games. We highly suggest that the players wear soccer shoes although tennis shoes are



acceptable. Baseball spikes (which have a front-toe cleat) are not acceptable.

- Goalies are required to wear a goalie jersey or colored pinnies to differentiate them from the field players. Goalie gloves are optional.
- No jewelry is allowed. This includes earrings, rings, bracelets, wristbands, barrettes, necklaces, or any other items the referee or coaches feel could cause injury to the player or other players. **We do not allow taping over training stud earrings.** They should be removed before all practices and games.
- We do recommend sports frames for players that require glasses but this is not required.
- Hard-billed hats are not allowed. We do allow winter hats and gloves during colder conditions. We recommend non-hooded sweatshirts for wear under the jersey. Hooded sweatshirts must have the hood tucked under the jersey if worn.

### General Guidelines: All Age Groups

- All players must play at least half of the game (2 quarters).
- Substitutions only enter the field of play at the halfway line and only during a stoppage of play. Example: Goal Kick, Throw-in, kick-off.
- Discuss with the Referee before the game about notifying him/her regarding substitutions.
- The visiting/ Away team will start with the kickoff for each match.
- The referee will keep track of scoring only to institute the 3/5 rule when needed.

3/5 Rule: If one team goes up by 3 goals, the opposing team **must** add 1 additional field player to the game. If the team with the extra player scores, the additional player must be removed. If a team goes up by 5 goals, the opposing team must add a second additional player on the field. This second player is in addition to the player who was added when the team was down by 3 goals.

\*Note: If a team that is losing by 3/5 goals does not have enough players to add 1 or 2 players, the opposing team will be required to remove a player.

### Age Group Specific Rules:

#### U7/U8 GUIDELINES

Ball Size: Size 3

Players: 4v4, 5v5, or 6v6 (will be determined yearly by the SPSA Board of Directors) *Goalkeepers will be at the SPSA Board of Directors discretion.*

Duration: (4) 10-minute quarters with a 5-minute break at half time and a 2-minute break between 1-2 and 3-4 quarters.

Throw-ins: (2) throw-in chances are permitted throughout the Fall and Spring. The ball is given to the other team for a throw-in after the second violation occurs.

Switch side of play: In the Fall teams will not switch sides of play after the first half. In the Spring teams will switch sides of play after the first half.

Offside Rule: None

Penalty kicks: None. Any fouls inside the penalty area to the attacking team will be awarded an Indirect Free Kick and have the ball moved to the 18-yard line.

Slide tackling: None

- All players will be rotated through all positions.
- All fouls will result in an Indirect Free Kick.
- All other general soccer rules apply.

## U9/U10 GUIDELINES

Ball Size: Size 4

Players: 7v7

Duration: (2) 20-minute halves with a 5-minute break at half time. If playing in extreme heat or with 2 or fewer subs the referee can allow (4) 10-minute quarters with a 5-minute break at half time and a 2-minute break between quarters 1-2 and 3-4.

Throw-ins: (2) throw-in chances in the Fall and (1) throw-in chance in the spring. The ball is given to the other team for a throw-in after the violation occurs.

Switch side of play: In the Fall teams will not switch sides of play after the first half. In the Spring teams will switch sides of play after the first half.

Build Out Line Rules: Yes [[Click Here](#)]

Offside Rule: Yes. Within the buildout line.

Penalty kicks: Yes.

Slide tackling: None

- All players will be rotated through all positions.
- All other general soccer rules apply.

## U11/U12 GUIDELINES

Ball Size: Size 4

Players: 9v9

Duration: (2) 25-minute halves with a 5-minute break at half time. If playing in extreme heat or with 2 or fewer subs the referee can allow for (4) 12-minute quarters with a 5-minute break at half time and a 2-minute break between quarters 1-2 and 3-4,

- All players will be rotated through all positions.
- All general soccer rules apply.

## U13/U14/U15 GUIDELINES

Ball Size: Size 5

Players: 9v9

Duration: (2) 25-minute halves with a 5-minute break at half time. If playing in extreme heat or with 2 or fewer subs and the referee allows (4) 12-minute quarters with a 5-minute break at half time and a 2-minute break between 1-2 and 3-4 quarters can be allowed

- All players will be rotated through all positions.
- All general soccer rules apply.

## Handling Lopsided Games in Coaching

As a coach, you may encounter situations where your team has a significant skill or athletic advantage over the opposing team. Despite the efforts of the SPSA Board of Directors to ensure balanced teams, factors such as player illness, other scheduling commitments, or off days can result in lopsided games. The SPSA believes that every game should provide both teams with an opportunity to learn and enjoy the game of soccer.

As the winning team's coach, you play a crucial role in helping the weaker team benefit from the experience.

### Strategies for the Winning Team:

- Rotate skilled players: Substitute your more skilled players more frequently. This allows less-skilled players more chances to participate. This helps distribute playing time and skill levels more evenly.
- Position adjustments: Move your skilled players to different positions, such as goalie or defense, where they can provide guidance and support to their less-experienced teammates. This can help balance the skill levels on the field.
- Passing requirements: Instruct your team to make a certain number of passes (e.g., three) before attempting a shot on goal. This encourages teamwork, ball movement, and patience in positional play.
- Shot restrictions: Challenge your skilled players to take shots only from outside the penalty area. This encourages them to develop their long-range shooting skills while preventing them from dominating the game near the goal.
- Creative solutions: Encourage your team to come up with their own ideas to balance the game while still allowing the opposing team opportunities to improve and enjoy themselves.

### Strategies for the Losing Team:

- Focus on individual improvement: Set individual goals for each player, like winning tackles, completing passes, or making strong saves.
- Maintain team spirit: Encourage and motivate players, focusing on effort and perseverance.
- Practice specific skills: Use the game as an opportunity to work on drills and techniques learned in practice.
- Celebrate small victories: Acknowledge individual accomplishments and positive plays.
- Communicate with the coach: Ask for specific feedback and areas to focus on.

Remember, a lopsided score, such as 11-0, can be demoralizing for the losing team. By striving for a more balanced outcome, like 7-2, you foster a positive and educational environment for both teams. Ultimately, as part of the South Park soccer community, instilling strong sportsmanship is essential in strengthening our organization and community. Adapt these strategies based on the specific situation and league rules. Communication and collaboration with the opposing coach are key.

By following these guidelines, coaches can navigate lopsided games constructively, ensuring that all players have a valuable and enjoyable experience.

## General Laws of the Game:

Below are some of the Laws of the game that most commonly occur during an SPSA match.

The Referee (Law 5): Each match is controlled by a referee who has FULL authority to enforce the Laws of the game in connection to the match to which they have been assigned. We use youth players of the association to referee matches. For all age groups, the decision of the Referee is final. Mistakes will be made, ask yourself, "If it was my child refereeing the game, how would I want them treated."

Offside (Law 11): There is no Offside awarded for U6, U7, & U8 divisions. The offside offense will be awarded for U10, U12, & U15 divisions.

Offside is when a player is past the halfway line, involved in active play, and closer to an opponent's goal than the ball or the second-to-last defender, without possession of the ball. Put another way, a player is offside if they are in the attacking half and closer to the opposing team's goal line than both the ball and the second-to-last defender. For U10 games an offside call can only be made within the build-out line area the attacking team is attacking or attempting to score in.

Penalty Kick (Law 14): No penalty kicks are awarded for U7/U8 games. Penalty kicks are awarded for U10, U12, & U15 games.

Throw-In (Law 15): Is awarded when the whole ball passes over the touchline, either on the ground or in the air. A second Throw-In will be allowed if the player commits a foul on the initial attempt. (U7/U8 and Fall season U10 players only). The coach or referee should explain the proper method before allowing the player to re-throw. A goal cannot be scored directly from a Throw-In.

Goal Kick (Law 16): This is awarded when the whole ball, having last touched a player of the attacking team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored. The ball is kicked from any point within the goal area by a player of the defending team. All opponents must remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play.

Corner Kick (Law 17): This is awarded when the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the defending team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air. The ball is placed inside the corner arc at the nearest corner. The ball is kicked by a player of the attacking team. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves. The kicker cannot play the ball a second time until it is touched by another player.

Fouls and Misconduct (Law 12): All fouls will result in an Indirect Free Kick for U7/U8 games. U9/U10, U11/U12, & U13/U14/U15 will follow Law 12 to award Direct and Indirect Free Kicks. The coach or referee should explain all infractions (fouls) to the players.

Unsporting behavior by players will not be tolerated (i.e., “trash-talking”, name calling, pushing, tripping, elbowing, etc.). Players will receive a warning from the referee OR may be shown a yellow or red card by the referee.

Since the organization uses a youth referee, each team’s coaching staff, as a responsible adult, shall deal with any unsporting behavior by removing the player from the game for a cool down period.

Direct Free Kick: A Direct Free Kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following six offenses in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Pushes an opponent

A direct free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following four offenses:

- Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball.
- Holds an opponent.
- Spits at an opponent.
- Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area).
- A goal can be scored directly from a Direct Free Kick.

Indirect Free Kick: A goal cannot be scored until the ball is touched by a second player of either team.

The following offenses result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team when committed by a goalkeeper inside his penalty area.

- Takes more than 6 seconds while controlling the ball with his hands before releasing it from his possession.
- Touches the ball again with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any other player.
- Touches the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate.
- Touches the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a throw-in taken by a team-mate.

An Indirect Free Kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee:

- Plays in a dangerous manner.
- Impedes the progress of an opponent.
- Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands.
- Commits any other offense, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player.

Challenging the Goalkeeper: A player is not allowed to challenge the goalkeeper with excessive force or in a manner that endangers the goalkeeper. This includes when the goalkeeper is in the process of releasing the ball.

Handling the Ball: The goalkeeper has special protections under the rules, particularly when they are in control of the ball with their hands within their own penalty area. Opposing players cannot kick or attempt to kick the ball when the goalkeeper is holding it or is in the process of controlling it.

Playing in a Dangerous Manner (Playing in a Dangerous Manner (PIADM)): If a player attempts to play the ball when it is close to the goalkeeper, and their action is not only dangerous but also prevents the goalkeeper from playing the ball for fear of injury, it can be considered "playing in a dangerous manner." This is an indirect free kick offense.

## Code of Ethics & Conduct

I hereby pledge to live up to my certification as an SPSA Coach by following the SPSA

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.
- I will promise to review and practice basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players.
- I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.
- I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.
- I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- I will learn the rules of soccer and teach these rules to my players.
- I will use those coaching techniques appropriate for all of the skills that I teach.
- I will remember that I am a youth sports coach and that the game is for children and not adults.
- I agree to complete the required Risk Management and Volunteer Disclosure Forms before interacting with any of my assigned players.

## What is a Good Coach?

- A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports.
- A good coach is someone who goes to work early, misses meals, gives away weekends, and plays havoc with family schedules so he/she can help a group of youngsters.
- A good coach is someone who stays a half-hour after practice or longer to make sure

every one of the players has a safe ride home.

- A good coach is someone who rarely has a mom or dad say, “Hey, Thanks!” but receives a lot of advice on game day.
- A good coach is someone who makes sure everyone gets to play.
- A good coach is someone who knows what to do if a player gets hurt.
- A good coach is someone who teaches young people that winning isn’t everything, but still lies in bed at night staring at the ceiling wondering what might have been done differently to have turned a loss into a win.
- A good coach is someone who can help a child learn to take mistakes in stride.
- A good coach is someone who sometimes helps a child develop abilities and confidence that sometimes did not exist before.
- A good coach is someone a youngster will remember a long time after the last game has ended and the season is over.

## Team Organization

All coaches are encouraged to establish lines of communication with parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This orientation usually takes place during the first practice. The information for parents may be put into an email or letter, but face-to-face communication is often preferable. Let parents know during this meeting how you will primarily communicate with them, whether it is by email, text message, in person, etc. Also, let parents know how you will communicate with them in case practices or games are canceled.

Communication with parents is important because it allows them to get acquainted with you, informs them about the nature (and risks) of the sport, informs them of league requirements for the team, and allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.), among other things.

When first contacting parents on your roster, make sure they know the day and time of the first practice, and let them know of required or recommended equipment. All players should come to practice and games with soccer cleats (not baseball or football cleats as they have toe cleats), the correct size soccer ball for the age group (U4-U8: size 3, U11: size 4, U15 and above size 5), shin guards and water bottle.

Take time at the beginning of the first team practice to introduce yourself to parents and players, introduce players to one another, and distribute handouts such as practice and game schedules or modified rules for the age group.

During the first practice, ask for volunteers to be assistant coaches or a team parent/manager.

Coaches are encouraged to utilize an app to plan and communicate their practices and games with their players (GroupMe, Mojo, TeamSnap)

## Team Responsibilities

The SPSA asks that you leave the practice and game facility in the same shape that you

found it. Please pick up and dispose of trash in the trash cans provided in various locations on the fields.

Benches are provided for players to use during games. The benches are not intended for parents or spectators. Please ask spectators to bring chairs. Do not move benches from player areas during games.

Teams will be assigned a date and time to work in the concession stand during the season or assigned a time to field set up activities, field prep, parking lot duty or to host at times throughout the season. As a coach, you are not responsible for working in the concession stand or volunteering for all the parent duties. However, you are responsible for finding volunteer workers from your team for these events and activities. Failure to do so may result in your team's games being delayed on game day or worst-case scenario your team being suspended from the league.

## Parent Responsibilities

In addition to team responsibilities, let parents know of their responsibilities as soccer parents. Some of the parent's responsibilities include:

- Transporting the player to and from practice and games on time
- Being supportive of all the players
- Helping the child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- Focusing on mastering skills and having fun, not winning
- Attending games and cheering for the team
- Working in the concession stand or when the team is assigned that duty
- Refraining from criticizing the opponents; being positive with all players
- Respecting the referees (They will make mistakes, but they are doing their best. If you feel you are better qualified or would like to volunteer as a referee, please see the SPSA Referee Commissioner.)
- Refraining from coaching your child during games (Try to understand and respect the difference between the roles of the coach and parent)

## First Aid

By accepting the role of coach, you are taking on responsibility for the care and safety of your players. Although parents and children share that responsibility, it is your job to help the kids practice and play as safely as possible.

Coaches at SPSA are not required to be CPR or First Aid certified. We only ask that you be able to perform very basic first aid, the same that you would perform on your children at home. A First Aid kit is located in the concession stand. It is stocked with basic supplies such as small bandages, anti-bacterial cream, sting relief cream, etc.

In the event of an emergency, the best option is to call for help by dialing 911.

For convenience, you may want to keep a few small bandages with you. It is amazing how a small bandage can "heal" the "worst wound" on a child. Although that last



statement was made in jest, remember that most children only need a little sympathy and comfort when they are hurt.

Your job as a coach is to recognize an injury if and when it happens, keep the situation calm, and call for help if necessary.

## Utilizing Parents

Identify one or more assistant coaches from the parents on your roster. Assistant coaches are extremely valuable. They make it possible to divide players into smaller groups so that each player gets individual attention, especially as roster sizes increase. Parents who would like to help but feel they lack the necessary skills should be encouraged to attend practice to help gather stray balls, wrangle kids or volunteer as a Team Parent. It is nice to have additional helpers, especially working with younger players.

Canceling training sessions or not being able to field a team because the coach is unavailable or unable to attend is not optimal for player development or team management. Attending events, practices, and games is a highlight for many of our player's days or weeks! Utilizing parent support appropriately is key in avoiding unnecessary canceling events and practices during a short season!

Please keep in mind that all assistant coaches and/ or team parents/ managers must comply with all background check requirements.

## Weather Contingency Plans

Prepare a bad weather contingency plan. Inform your players and parents at the beginning of the season whether you will practice in the rain or cancel practice if it's raining. Even if you practice in the rain, you should not have practice when conditions are dangerous, for example when there is lightning or if the field has become too wet to permit safe play. If you must cancel practice due to adverse weather, have an organized plan to inform parents.

Please note that the SPSA doesn't let a little rain stop us from playing soccer. We will only cancel games or close fields for practice in the event of a thunderstorm or if there is standing water on the fields. Also, we do not cancel games due to cold weather. During cold weather games, players are encouraged to wear sweatpants, a sweatshirt or jacket, and even a hat and gloves. Please keep in mind that sweatshirts and jackets must be worn underneath jerseys.

The SPSA Board of Directors will make any decision to cancel games in the event of inclement weather. If the decision is made to cancel games, the SPSA will send out an email to all registered parents and post the same on their Facebook page. The SPSA will make every attempt to have the decision made and the notices posted and distributed by 7:00 am on Saturday mornings.

If the weather is questionable and you don't see an e-mail or a post on Facebook,

assume that all practices and games will take place as scheduled. Please note that the website will not be updated with daily field closings. An e-mail will be sent to the league and a Facebook post will be made regarding practices and games.

## Practice Objectives

There are two main objectives for any soccer practice:

- Have fun!
- Learn to become a better soccer player!

To achieve the second objective you must develop teaching goals for the season before you start. Don't let setting goals for the season scare you. Depending on the age group, your main goal for the season may be to have your team dribble toward the correct goal without you telling them or not taking the ball away from a teammate.

The coaches' meeting is scheduled two weeks before games begin, so you should have about two practices before the first game. Since you will not have time to teach everything during the first practices, choose the topics you want to focus on and build your practices around those topics.

Some of the topics you might consider include (depending on the age group):

- Rules: Kick-off, Offside, Throw-in, Goal kick, and Corner kick
- Techniques: Dribbling, Passing, Receiving, Shooting, and Turning
- Tactics: Positions, Crossing, Marking, Support and Shape

The SPSA can provide you with access to tools or curriculum materials to plan an appropriate soccer training by age group and our topic. Reach out to the SPSA Coach and Player Development Commissioner for assistance. The SPSA can and will provide you with access to the team MOJO application/ coaching platform.

This application will provide the volunteer coach with expertly crafted and detailed practice plans and activities for all age groups. By using a detailed proactive plan crafted by MOJO you take the guesswork out of what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. The activities and practice sessions crafted by MOJO can be customized by the volunteer coach too. A powerful component of the MOJO application is how it provides coaching points and video demonstrations for the activities that it suggests. All of this allows the novice coach to be comfortable and confident when training their players. This application also allows the coach to communicate with their team about upcoming events, practices, and games. The SPSA asks that every SPSA coach attempt to utilize this application to train their soccer players.

You do not have to teach your team all the tactics that are suggested above. Be realistic in setting your objectives and goals for the season. Consider the age and experience of your players, and then set your priorities for the season. What are the things you want to cover before the games begin, and what are the things you want to continue throughout the season?

## Basic Coaching Concepts for Youth Soccer Players

Coordination and Basic Motor Skills: Children are learning to coordinate and control their body movements. They are learning to balance and are generally not very nimble or agile. Work on activities that develop basic motor skills. Games with and without the soccer ball will be beneficial and fun for very young children.

Contacting the Ball: There are six surfaces (inside, outside, instep, sole, toe, and heel) used for kicking, dribbling, or controlling a soccer ball. For most recreational players, the toes, the laces (instep), and the inside of the foot are the most commonly used surfaces. Practice activities to encourage players to use different parts of their feet and ask them to “imagine” new ways to kick and/ or dribble the ball.

Dribbling: Dribbling the ball is probably the most important soccer skill at any level. Use games that encourage players to dribble, stop, and turn the ball. Work on moving in different directions with the ball under control.

Passing: It is important to encourage beginners to control the ball so that passes (or dribbles) are attempted with a purpose in mind, rather than as a means of kicking the ball to safety. However, not all players will pass the ball – especially younger players – for fear they may not get it back. Keep this in mind as you teach passing.

Shooting: Coaches should encourage shots from various distances and angles.

Ball Control: Time, space and repetition are the most important elements for improving comfort level on the ball. Small-sided games and one-player/one-ball activities provide opportunities for young players to begin associating the techniques of dribbling, passing, and controlling the soccer ball.

Heading: Heading the ball is not permitted until a child reaches its U12 year. You may have a child who will try to head the ball because they have seen older players do it.

Support: Young players should not be restricted in their movements on the field. Passing to other players should be encouraged, although dribbling the ball is the most likely way to advance the ball for the younger children. Limiting players to a particular area of the field does not allow for the natural emergence of supporting positions and angles that become so important for positional play in later years.

Spaces versus Positions: For young players, positional coaching of any kind is irrelevant and may be detrimental to their fun, enjoyment, and progress. Rather than be told what position to play, young players should be encouraged to “find” new supporting positions away from teammates so that passes can be made. Focus on shape and players' movement within the pitch to support each other.

Defending: “Defending” for younger players should be no more complicated than encouraging the player who lost the ball to win the ball back. The remaining players should be encouraged to move into a compact team shape to defend their goal. Players will often transition from offense to defense and move back toward their goal naturally, but it is also true that young children will often stop playing when the ball is lost. When

the ball comes near them, they will become involved again. Because players should be encouraged to move forward when attacking, there will be many situations when no one is on defense when the opposing team gains possession. Understand that this is a part of the game and one reason why scores are generally much higher in small-sided games.

Transition: When the ball turns over from offense to defense or from defense to offense, the game offers chances for players to demonstrate awareness of two very important concepts: regaining possession of the ball and counterattack to goal. Players should be encouraged to react as quickly as possible to any change in possession.

Creativity: Because younger players are learning to coordinate game activities with body control, “creativity” is more likely to be seen as good ball control or faking movements. Players who can change speed and direction and retain control of the ball are applying techniques in a creative way. Players who can move their bodies from side to side in an effort to “fake out” a defender are showing signs of creativity. Players who experiment with different parts of their feet or control the ball with different body parts are showing signs of creativity. Players who shoot at the goal from various distances and angles are showing signs of creativity. Allowing children to think and create their own solutions to the game’s problems is a critical element of coaching. Ideally, can we be creative by incorporating skill! Can we solve problems with skill and creativity and not just kicking the ball away!

## Game Etiquette

Both teams will share the same side of the field, also known as the bench or player side of the field, during games. Please note that the benches are for our players, not spectators.

Only players, coaches, and referees should be on the bench/player side of the field. In addition, no one is permitted to sit or stand at the ends of the fields near the goals. Only one assistant coach or team parent may sit on the bench with the players.

Parents, friends, and family should sit on the side of the field that is opposite the players. Also, spectators should sit at least three feet from the sidelines so that the referee may clearly see the sidelines and so that the players have room to throw/kick the ball into play.

For U7/U8 and above, the coach will be on the sideline. The coach may move up and down the entire sideline on their half of the field only. The coach may not move around the end line to help with corner kicks or goal kicks.

After the game, it is encouraged to line up your squad and lead them in shaking hands and congratulating the opposing players and coach. Although the score is not kept for any official reason, players are usually aware of the outcome of the game. Teach your players to win humbly and to lose graciously.

## Frequently Asked Questions

When are games played? Games are played every Saturday during the season. Depending on the number of players registered (and the number of teams), games are usually scheduled between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm.

What is the make-up game procedure if games are rained out? If games are cancelled due to rain or field conditions the SPSA will decide as to where/ when your canceled game will be made up. As stated above the first cancelation of the season is generally not made up.

Do you keep score? Since the in-house program with the SPSA is a recreational soccer league, we do not keep scores for standings. We strive to teach our children good sportsmanship and how to play the game of soccer. The score is kept by officials who are learning how to officiate and to help determine the 3/5 rule mentioned. The SPSA does run an end-of-the-year tournament where scores will be kept and will determine who advances to the championship game.

We know that realistically a child who can count will probably know the score; however do not encourage them to announce it to the team, or the opposing team. If they ask you if they won, you should ask them "Did you have fun?" If they answer "yes" then that is all that is important.

How do I find a specific field for a game or where do I park? Included in this handbook is a map of our playing fields and parking areas.

## Basic Soccer Terms

One does not need vast soccer knowledge to coach at the SPSA. In this section, some basic soccer terms are defined to help increase your knowledge. This is by no means an exhaustive list of terms, but terms you may hear, and you should start to incorporate in your coaching. Coaches may find more soccer terms online or in soccer coaching books.

- Field: the rectangular area where a soccer match is played.
- Pitch: a British term for the field.
- Goal: <sup>1</sup>structure consisting of two posts, a crossbar, and a net into which all goals are scored; <sup>2</sup>when a ball crosses the goal line into the goal a point is awarded.
- End line: the line running along the width of the field and runs across the front of the goal
- Goal line: the line running along the width of the field directly between the goal posts.  
Sideline: also known as the touchline; the line that runs the length of the field on each side
- Centerline: also known as the half line, the midfield line, or the midline; the line that divides the field in half along its width.
- Center circle: a circular area with a set radius in the center of the field from where kickoffs are taken to start or restart the game.
- Center spot: the spot inside the center circle from where all kickoffs are taken  
Penalty area: a rectangular area in front of the goal with its edge on

the goal line; the goalkeeper may use his hands to play the ball only inside this area; during a penalty kick, players may not enter this area before the kick is taken.

- Penalty spot: the spot within the penalty area in front of the center of the goal from where penalty kicks are taken (penalty kicks are only given in U8 and older age divisions).
- Penalty arc: a circular arc whose center is the penalty spot and extends from the top of the penalty area; it designates an area that players are not allowed to enter before a penalty kick is taken.
- Goal box: also known as the goal area; the rectangular box in front of each goal with its edge on the goal line from where goal kicks are taken.
- Corner arc: a quarter-circle located at each of the four corners of the field from where corner kicks are taken.
- Corner flag: the flag located at each of the four corners of the field.
- Coach's box: also known as the coach's area; area defined by NYSA where coaches are allowed during the game; there is no coach's box for U4 and U5 age divisions since the coach is allowed on the field with the players.
- Player's area: also known as the bench area; area defined by NYSA where players who are not playing sit during the game.
- Goalkeeper: also known as the goalie, keeper, or net-minder; the player positioned directly in front of the goal who tries to prevent shots from getting into the goal; the only player allowed to use his hands on the field although only within the penalty area.
- Defender: also known as fullback or back; the player on a team whose primary job is to keep the opposing team from scoring goals.
- Midfielder: also known as halfback; the players who play in the midfield region of the field and link the defensive functions and the offensive functions of a team.
- Forward: also known as attacker or striker; the players who play in front of the rest of the team near the opposing goal and are usually responsible for most of the team's scoring.
- Referee: makes sure the game is played according to the rules of soccer, specifically the rules of FIFA and the FIFA-modified rules of SPSA; responsible for starting and restarting play, tracking time remaining, and calling fouls; they wear a uniform that distinguishes them from both teams.
- Center Referee: the referee in charge of the game.
- Linesmen: also known as the assistant referees; the referees who assist the center referee by running the sideline on each half of the field to assist in citing fouls, offside calls, and substitutions.
- Fourth official: The official is used occasionally on the sideline to assist the other referees with substitutions and is positioned in the coach's and player's area.
- Foul: a violation of the rules for which a free kick is given to the opposing team.
- Advantage rule: a clause in the rules that directs the referee to refrain from stopping play for a foul if a stoppage would benefit the team that committed the violation.
- Dangerous play: an action by a player that the referee considers dangerous to

that player or others.

- Obstruction: a foul in which a defensive player, instead of going after the ball, illegally uses his body to prevent an offensive player from playing it.
- Offside: a violation called when a player in an offside position receives a pass from a teammate; it is not a violation for a player to be in an offside position; a foul will only be called when the offending player becomes involved in the play or interferes with an opponent. Please consult the FIFA Laws of the Game for a more detailed explanation of offside and when a player may or may not be called in violation of the offside rule.
- Offside position: an attacking player positioned so that he is closer to the opponent's goal than both the ball and the second-to-last opposing player; a player is not offside if he is exactly even with either the ball or second-to-last opponent; please consult the FIFA Laws of the Game for a more detailed explanation of the offside position.
- Free kick: a kick awarded to a team after a foul has been committed by the opposing team; the player kicks a stationary ball without interference from the opposing team; all free kicks in the U4-U8 age divisions are indirect kicks, except for penalty kicks in the U8 age division.
- Indirect free kick: a free kick is usually awarded for a "less serious" foul committed by the opposing team; a goal can only be scored from an indirect kick after it has touched another player whether on the same team or opposing team.
- Direct free kick: a free kick awarded for a "serious" foul committed by the opposing team; a goal can be scored directly from this kick without it touching another player.
- Penalty kick: a free kick taken from the penalty spot by a player against the opposing goalkeeper with all other players standing outside the penalty area and penalty arc; penalty kicks are only given in U10 age division and above.
- Yellow card: also known as a caution; a yellow card that a referee holds up to warn a player of dangerous or unsportsmanlike behavior; two yellow cards to the same player in one game earn the player an automatic red card.
- Red card: a red card that a referee holds up to a player to signal his removal from the game; usually presented for violent behavior or multiple rule infractions (i.e. receiving two yellow cards).
- Sending off: an ejection resulting from a player being shown a red card; when a player is sent off or receives a red card, the player may not play the remainder of the match, the team must continue a player down and the player may not play in the next match; the player should attend the next match and sit on the bench with his teammates.
- Goal kick: a restart of play where the ball is kicked from the goal box away from the goal; the kick is awarded to the defending team when a ball that crosses the end line was last touched by an attacking player.
- Corner kick: a restart of play where the ball is kicked from the corner arc in an attempt to score; the kick is awarded to the attacking team when a ball that crosses the end line was last touched by a defending player.
- Kickoff: the method of starting a game or restarting it after each goal from the center spot.

- Drop ball: a method of restarting the game where the referee drops the ball between two opposing players facing each other.
- Throw-in: a type of restart where a player throws the ball from behind his head with both hands while standing with both feet on the ground behind a sideline; awarded to a player on the team opposite the team that last touched the ball before it crossed the sideline.

## The SPSA Goal

One of the most common problems we see in youth soccer games is the tendency for players to simply kick the ball away whenever it comes to them without any real thought or intent.

The reasons this happens are a combination of the player's lack of comfort with the ball and the instructions and mindset of the adults who are involved in the game.

A lack of technical ability in being able to receive the ball under pressure is one cause of players kicking the ball away without thought. Players do not want to make a mistake and give the ball away so it's better to just get rid of it. Technical ability is something that needs to be addressed in practice sessions by our coaches. Coaches need to design activities that will replicate the pressure of receiving the ball in a game and give the player lots of repetitions of this type of scenario.

Another reason why players just kick the ball away is the message we as adults are sending young players. We must create an environment where they are encouraged to try and receive the ball, get control of the ball, and make a decision regardless of the outcome. Young players need us to support them and be positive for attempting the correct action even when there is not a favorable outcome.

How many times have we heard parents and coaches tell players to "Get Rid Of The Ball" so players are being conditioned by the adults that they should kick the ball away? This is especially true whenever the ball is in the team's half. Many adults are under the misconception that if the player kicks the ball away down the field anywhere the danger is gone, that as long as the ball is away from the goal it's a good thing.

That can be the case if your team regains possession of the ball, but as soon as the other team gets the ball no matter where they get it there is a threat and the opportunity for the other team to score. In addition, your team has now given up possession of the ball and has no chance to score.

You will find that as you play teams of a higher standard they will capitalize on you giving them the ball back no matter where you give it back to them on the pitch.

So, the mindset and narrative for our younger players has to change and this change has to start with the attitude of the adults involved in the game. We have to stop being so risk-averse for the sake of possibly delaying the other team's scoring and we have to install the confidence for our young players to practice receiving and keeping the ball in pressure situations as this is the only way they will learn and develop the skills they



need.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM? Aimlessly kicking the ball away is a problem for a couple of reasons.

The first reason is that many times without any thought or intention on where or who they are kicking the ball to the ball ends up going back to the opposition. The first goal of playing soccer is to establish possession of the ball as an individual and then as a team.

When a player kicks the ball away when it comes to them they have immediately given up possession of the ball personally and now there is a 50% chance that the ball will go to the opposing team.

The second problem is that of an individual player development perspective.

If we want players to improve and become good players then they must be able to master the ball or become proficient with it. This starts with receiving the ball and then deciding to perform a soccer action with it, dribble it, pass it, keep it, or shoot it. When the player kicks the ball away every time, they are only ever improving at one action which is kicking it away, this is not an action we want to encourage.

For the player to develop and improve as a player we must encourage them to do something meaningful with the ball every time it comes to them regardless of the pressure they are under or the outcome.

The SPSA would argue the only exceptions to this rule would be if the player is trying to clear the ball on their goal line to prevent a goal or if they are taking the opportunity to kick the ball the first time to score a goal.

We want to develop players that actively think about what they are doing with the ball at every moment of the game. We want to encourage and teach players at a young age soccer actions and we want them to have opportunities in the game to try all of them.

- When should I dribble?
- When should I pass?
- When should I hide/shield the ball?
- When should I shoot?

Improve the player's ability to receive the ball. Design lots of Rondo and possession activities where receiving and keeping the ball under pressure are practiced.

Improve player's comfort on the ball and mastery of what they can do with it. Play lots of 1v1 activities where keeping the ball is emphasized.

Start teaching young players when to choose which soccer action.

- When should they dribble?
- When should they pass?

- When should they hide/shield the ball?
- When should they shoot?

Have all adults involved in your games stop telling players to kick the ball away!

Have all adults encourage the players to receive the ball and perform a soccer action with the ball. Positive reinforcement for trying regardless of the outcome of the action.

### Evans Field In-House Soccer Field and Parking Map:

[Click here!](#)

