

# Fairfield Area SAY Soccer

## Dear Parents, Fans and Coaches,

Sometimes in the heat of competition, it is hard for everyone to remember why we are at the Fairfield SAY Fields. Contrary to many an opinion, it is not to win a soccer game. *The purpose of SAY Soccer is to provide our youth the ideals of good sportsmanship, fair play, and honesty for the betterment of their physical and social well being through soccer.*

Whether we know it or not, we are role models for every youth on those fields. Our actions or reactions to events will become their model of action for other events in their lives. Fairfield SAY believes that all of the youth on the field deserve our praise and applause whether they are on your child's team or not. Good play should be rewarded with cheers from all that are watching. Players should never be taunted at or yelled at for making a mistake during the course of a game by an adult or another player.

Referees should also never be yelled at or confronted by a coach, parent or player. The referees are out there because they love the game and they love all of the soccer playing youth. They may get paid, but it is not nearly what the fee for referees usually is. So much of the soccer rules are based on the opinion of the referee at the time of the infraction. What they see may not be what you see, but you must respect their call. All SAY players are rewarded for their excellent season of participating in the game of soccer. So...sit back, watch, and enjoy the game!

## Know the Game!

Soccer is a simple game, but you and the players will enjoy it more if you know a few of the Laws (not "rules") that are frequently misunderstood. Soccer is intended to be a continuous action sport. Whenever possible, the referee will let play continue. Thus, when a player falls, and the referee judges that the player is not at immediate risk, (s)he will generally let the game proceed until a natural stoppage. Of course, the referee will stop play if a player needs immediate attention or would be endangered by continuing play.

Players cannot deliberately play the ball with their hands or arms, except for the goalkeeper within his/her own penalty area. However, accidental contact between hands or arms and the ball occurs frequently, especially with younger players, and is not an infringement. In such cases, the referee will not stop play, since no breach of the Laws has occurred. A spectator who yells "Handball!" in such circumstances merely reveals his ignorance.

A throw-in must be taken with part of one foot on or behind the touch-line (sideline) and both feet touching the ground at the moment the ball is released. The ball must be thrown from behind and over the head, using both hands. This motion is sometimes difficult for young players to master, and referees in younger divisions may, at their discretion, allow retakes in order to help the players learn this skill.

Unlike basketball and gridiron football, the boundary lines are part of the field of play. The ball is not out of play until it has completely crossed the goal line or touch line. This implies that a goal is not scored unless the ball has wholly crossed the goal line between the goal posts and beneath the crossbar.

Soccer is a sport designed to give skill the advantage over force. The Laws permit physical contact, but limit it to non dangerous forms. Other kinds of contact are illegal and are penalized by the referee. Careless, reckless, or unnecessarily hard contact by a player on his opponent does not become legal simply because the ball was struck in the process. This point is frequently misunderstood by spectators and players, who exhibit their ignorance by yelling "But he got the ball, ref!"

Referees penalize only clear infringements. In fact, they are specifically instructed not to penalize doubtful or trifling breaches of the Laws. In other words, the game is supposed to "flow", and the referee is expected to interfere only to protect the safety of the players or to ensure equity according to the Laws. The referee is explicitly given broad latitude to judge when his/her interference is needed. This is in sharp contrast with many sports popular in the United States, in which spectators expect the referee to stop play for all sorts of trifling violations. A knowledgeable spectator will understand and appreciate why, for example, a referee ignores inconsequential jostling between opponents and allows the game to proceed uninterrupted.

When the referee stops the game, (s) he does not signal the reason for the stoppage. Instead, arm signals are used to indicate how the game is to be restarted. In unusual circumstances, the referee may explain a particular decision to the players.

### **Soccer Humor**

A woman had tickets to the MLS Cup Finals right at midfield. As she sits down, a man comes down & asks if anyone is sitting in the seat next to her. 'No', she says, 'the seat is empty.' 'This is incredible', said the man. 'Who in their right mind would have a seat like this for the MLS Cup and not use it?' She says 'Well, actually, the seat belongs to me. I was supposed to come with my husband, but he passed away. This is the first MLS Cup or US Open Cup Final we haven't been together since we got married in 1967. 'Oh... I'm sorry to hear that. That's terrible. But couldn't you find someone else - a friend or relative, or even a neighbor - to take the seat?' The woman shakes her head 'No, they're all at the funeral.'

### **Laws of the Game**

The goal of soccer is very simple: Put the ball into the opposing team's net more times than they put the ball into your net. Following is an explanation of the field positions in soccer, as well as the laws of the game

Each team comprises the following:

- **Goalkeeper, goalie, or keeper:** This player is unique in that he may use his hands within the penalty area to keep the opposing team from scoring. The keeper is the only player legally allowed to touch the ball with his hands.

- **Defenders:** Their primary role is to take the ball away and start the attack in their team's favor. Their secondary role is to close down the space and the attack of the opposing team.
- **Midfielders:** They play both offense and defense. The midfield (middle ground) is the link between offense and defense.
- **Forwards:** They finish the attack and try to score. They must be willing to come back and aid in the midfield or defense to start an attack. Often, forwards are required to help defend corner kicks and free kicks and help at other times when their team's defense is under heavy pressure.

Other than the goalkeeper, the players' positions are determined by different tactics. All players must develop offensive and defensive skills, and every player has the potential to be a scorer. There is no such thing as a fixed space or position in soccer. Players may interchange positions according to the flow of the game.

A ball and open space to play are the only essentials. In organized youth practices and leagues, however, shin guards are mandatory for safety. Although there are laws in international soccer to penalize certain types of play, many U.S. youth leagues have their own interpretation. Two examples are contrary to international law: lying on the ground while kicking a ball can be ruled as "dangerous play" in the youth game. Also, some referees allow girls to protect their chests from the ball by using their arms.

## **Laws of the Game**

International soccer is governed by FIFA (the international soccer federation). They've boiled the game of soccer down to 17 laws, which are presented here, in an adapted version.

### **Law 1: The Field of Play**

The soccer field is rectangular, not more than 130 yards in length (minimum 100 yards) and not more than 100 yards in width (minimum 50 yards). At each end is a goal, a penalty area, a penalty spot, and a goal area. There is a semicircular arc extending over the center part of the penalty area. The arc is 10 yards from the penalty spot and marks the minimum distance that the other players must stand away from the penalty-shot taker. The halfway line divides the field equally in two. Corner arcs are in each corner of the field. This is where the ball must be placed for corner kicks.

### **Law 2: The Ball**

The ball is made of leather or synthetic material. Its circumference can be between 27 and 28 inches, and its weight can be between 14 and 16 ounces for a full-size (#5) ball. The referee must decide a ball's appropriate pressure and is at liberty to replace the ball at any time.

### **Law 3: Number of Players**

A team is comprised of 11 players (10 outfield players and a goalkeeper, U-12 and older). A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than 7 players. It is possible that a team of 7 would face a team of 11. Substitution rules are determined by local leagues.

**Law 4: Player's Equipment**

Players should not wear anything that might injure themselves or another player. For this reason, referees will inspect players and have them remove watches and jewelry. The goalkeeper must wear a distinguishing jersey. Shin guards are mandatory, Clothing should not restrict movement, and cleats should be worn where applicable.

**Law 5: The Referee**

The referee is completely in charge of the game. He keeps the time and the official score. The referee is responsible for the administering of punishment for rule infractions and misconduct. The referee may halt the game for injury or cancel the game to protect the safety of players, such as for inclement weather or poor field conditions or for any infringement of the Laws. All decisions by the referee are final. **Fairfield SAY uses the two man system.**

**Law 7: Duration of the Game**

Youth soccer game time's rules vary according to age group. Games may differ in duration according to competition and rules.

**Law 8: Start and Restart of Play**

The winner of a coin toss chooses which goal it will attack in the first half. The other team takes the kickoff from the center spot (center of the field) to start the game. After a team scores, the other team restarts play with another kickoff from the center spot. A dropped ball is a way of restarting the game after a temporary stoppage such as one caused by an injury or infraction. For dropped balls, the referee drops the ball at the site of the stoppage. After it bounces, the ball can be played.

**Law 9: The Ball In and Out of Play**

The ball is out of play only when it has fully crossed one of the field boundaries. It is still in play if it bounces off a goalpost, a corner flag, or an official. Play is stopped when the referee blows his whistle.

**Law 10: Method of Scoring**

A goal is scored when the entire ball crosses the line between the two goal posts, beneath the crossbar. The team that scores the most goals wins. If zero or an equal amount of goals are scored, the contest is a tie. Many leagues have rules that provide for breaking ties. These options range from sudden-death overtime to overtimes of set length to penalty-kick shootouts.

**Law 11: Offside**

A player is considered offside if he is nearer the opponents' goal than both the ball and two opposing players at the moment the ball is played forward by another member of his team. A player is not in an offside position if he is in his own half of the field, if he is level with the last defender, or if the ball was received directly from a goal kick, corner kick, or throw-in. A player is not penalized for being offside unless, in the opinion of the referee, he is seeking to gain advantage or is interfering with play or an opponent. An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team when a player is offside.

## **Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct**

A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team at the point of the foul for the following offenses.

- Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent
- Tripping an opponent
- Jumping at an opponent
- Charging an opponent in a dangerous manner
- Spitting at, striking, or attempting to strike an opponent
- Holding or pushing
- Deliberately contacting the ball with hands or arms (applies to all players except the goalkeeper)
- When tackling, making contact with the opponent before making contact with the ball

Should any of the above offenses be committed by the defensive team in the penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded to the attacking team

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team at the point of the foul for the following offenses.

- Playing in a dangerous manner
- Charging when the ball is not within playing distance
- Obstructing an opponent
- Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands
- Delays by the goalkeeper
- If a defensive player deliberately plays or throws in the ball to his goalkeeper and the goalkeeper plays it with his hands

A caution (yellow card) is issued to a player if he:

- Shows dissent (by word or action) with a referee's decision
- Enters or re-enters the field without the referee's permission
- Displays unsporting conduct
- Displays persistent infringement of the Laws of the Game.
- Disregards the required distance during restart of play with a free kick or corner kick

An indirect kick is awarded for the last three infractions.

A player can be ejected from the game (red card) for:

- A serious foul
- Violent behavior
- Spitting at another player or anyone else
- Denying a goal, or the opportunity to score a goal, to an opponent by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to the goalkeeper in his own team's penalty area)
- Denying a goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent by using an offense punishable by a penalty kick or free kick
- Use of foul or abusive language
- A second yellow-card offense

**Law 13: Free Kick**

Free kicks are either direct or indirect. For both direct and indirect free kicks, the ball must be stationary when the kick is taken. The kicker cannot touch the ball a second time until it has been touched another player.

A direct free kick can be kicked directly into the goal without the assistance of another player. For an indirect free kick that goes into the net to be considered a goal, it must be touched by another player other than the kicker.

On free kicks, the opposing team must be at least 10 yards away, unless standing on their own goal line. For a team taking a free kick from its own penalty area, the opponents must be outside the penalty area and at least 10 yards away.

**Law 14: Penalty Kick**

A penalty kick is awarded to the attacking team when the defending team commits a foul that warrants a direct free kick inside its own penalty area. This type of kick results in the greatest advantage for the attacking team because it pits the kicker against the goalkeeper. The penalty kick is taken from the penalty spot. Other players must stand at least 10 yards away from the penalty spot and be outside the penalty area. The person taking the kick cannot play the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. If the ball rebounds off the goalkeeper or goalpost into the field of play, it is live.

**Law 15: Throw-ins**

A throw-in is a method of restarting play. It is awarded when the entire ball passes over the touch line (sideline), either on the ground or in the air. The team that did not kick it out of play throws the ball in from the point where it crossed the touch line. The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play. The thrower may not touch the ball again until it has been touched by another player. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

**Law 16: Goal Kick**

A goal kick is a method of restarting play. A goal kick is awarded when the entire ball, having last touched a player of the attacking team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air. A defending player kicks the ball from anywhere within the goal area. Opponents remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play when it is kicked directly beyond the penalty area. The kicker cannot play the ball again until another player touches it.

**Law 17: Corner Kick**

A corner kick is a method of restarting play. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick. A corner kick is awarded when the entire 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 in the nearest corner arc and is kicked by an attacking player. Defending players must be at least 10 yards away from the corner arc. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves. The kicker cannot play the ball again until another player touches it.