

North Allegheny Soccer Club

Age Group Coordinator Manual

Guidelines and Suggestions for AGCs

NASC
Updated 11/18/2011

Introduction

Age Group Coordinators (AGC) are instrumental to the success of North Allegheny Soccer Club. The main responsibility of the AGC is to oversee the soccer season for the specific age group for which they are assigned. This involves recruiting coaches, assigning teams, coordinating game and practice field assignments, issuing and collecting equipment, and arranging for team pictures (for some age groups).

The AGC position is challenging but rewarding. When hundreds of young boys and girls get the thrill of playing soccer for North Allegheny Soccer Club, the AGC can take great satisfaction in making this all possible.

Thank you for agreeing to volunteer as an Age Group Coordinator for NASC. You are making a difference in the soccer playing lives of many young boys and girls and NASC appreciates your help.

Where do I begin?

First confirm with NASC when registration for the upcoming season will occur. It's normally June 15 - August 15 for the Fall season and January 15 - March 15 for the spring season. This will help you to put a timeline together for your age group and the items detailed in this AGC manual.

Then visit the website, www.nasoccerclub.org, and review the program information on the site. If information needs to be updated, make notes of these items and send them via email to the Vice President of NASC.

Once this information is updated and the club is ready for registration, you get to take a deep breath while players register and before you need to assemble the teams.

Team Building

Determining the Number of Teams

The number of teams in your age group is determined by both the number of players who register and the number of head and assistant coaches who have volunteered. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to have too few coaches for the players who have registered and you may need to recruit volunteers to coach. Emailing those who have volunteered to be an assistant coach and asking them to be a head coach, is a good first step. If you don't get enough coaches from this plea, you may have to send a broader email to parents of all registered players asking for volunteers to coach. To access email addresses for the entire age group, contact the club registrar or other board member.

Refer to the NASC website, www.nasoccerclub.org, to confirm how many players are on the field at one time for games in this age group. Teams should be large enough to have at least 4-5 substitutes but not so large that it will be difficult for a child to play at least half of the game. Once you determine the ideal number of kids per team, see how many have registered and this will tell you how many teams you would like to assemble. As long as you have enough coaches for these teams, you are ready to assemble teams.

Two things to keep in mind: 1) an odd number of teams will require a bye in the schedule each week, so if an even number of teams is possible, it makes scheduling easier; and 2) late registrants are likely, so be prepared for the possibility of adding players after your teams have been assembled. It is a good idea to make it clear to late registrants that special requests (playing with a particular friend or for a particular coach) cannot be accommodated.

Assembling the Teams

NASC partners with Blue Sombrero for website hosting and online registration. You can learn how to assign players to teams by watching the team building tutorials on Blue Sombrero's website. Follow the link below to find the tutorials.

<http://support.bluesombrero.com/AdminSupport/ClubProductHelpCenter/tabid/7532/Default.aspx>

The Club has two primary objectives when building teams: players on teams with their friends and teams that are competitively balanced. It is fine to honor friend and/or coach requests as long as it does not affect the competitive balance of the league.

The best approach to team building is to assemble teams in a database program such as Microsoft Excel. Build teams initially based on friend and coach requests. Once teams are assembled, add up the player ratings (from either coach or parent evaluations), and see if the teams are balanced in terms of average ratings. If the teams are not balanced, move players around so that ratings become balanced. When doing this, be sure to keep in mind that if you cannot honor friend requests, try to get players with at least some other players from their school or neighborhood.

The Club likes to allow players to play with their friends. At the same time, NASC is committed to competitive balance so that games are close and teams have a chance to compete fairly.

As you assign players to teams, these are some additional considerations:

- Accommodate coach and assistant coach requests
- Attempt to accommodate friend requests
- Maintain competitive balance among teams
- Attempt to accommodate requests for specific coaches
- Assign players with consideration of neighborhoods where they live and schools they attend (kids always like to play with their friends)
- Attempt to accommodate special requests from parents
- Attempt to balance ages so teams have both older and younger players

Note: In Blue Sombrero, the default view in the team builder does not show the Comments and Friend Request fields. You should add these fields to your view before starting to build teams.

Preparing the Schedule

It's a good idea to get specific requests from your coaches about game times or conflicts prior to preparing the season schedule. Once you have these, you can begin preparing the schedule. To prepare the season schedule, you may use Match Scheduler on the www.nasoccerclub.org website. After you log in to the site, you can find Match Scheduler under the Teams tab. Once the schedule is prepared, review it carefully to make sure you have accommodated the special requests to the best of your abilities.

Field Scheduling

Practices

The Field Coordinator will let you know what nights and fields are available for practice in your age group. Once you have this information, send it out to your coaches and ask for their practice night requests. Due to the number of players and teams participating in NASC, there is limited flexibility for scheduling around the days scheduled by the Field Coordinator. However, if there is a conflict that cannot be resolved, contact the Field Coordinator to see if there is any availability that may help in accommodating all of your teams' practice requests.

Once you have confirmation from the Field Coordinator, send practice days, times, and field locations out to your coaches. Because of the multiple fields located at the various complexes, it is a good idea to attend the first practice sessions to make sure your teams find the assigned fields correctly.

Games

Once the game schedule is complete, forward the schedule to the Field Coordinator. The Field Coordinator will assign fields for the games and let you know when and what time the games will take place.

Once you have the schedule finalized with fields and times, send this information out to your coaches so they can distribute it to the players.

Referees

Scheduling

When you have the game schedule, complete with fields and times, send it to the Referee Assignor. The Referee Assignor will schedule the referees for all games.

Please be sure to communicate to the referee assignor if there are any special circumstances surrounding your age group. For example, if you were not able to recruit enough coaches and you decide to have larger teams and split them into two games each week, the Referee Assignor must know this to give you two referees each game.

Payment

The coaches pay the referee(s) each week. At the start of the season, NASC will provide each coach with referee money for the season. NASC will provide a check to each AGC in an amount to cover all referee payments for the season. The AGC must cash the check and divide it to issue the necessary amount to each coach prior to the start of the season. The coaches are then responsible for paying the referees each game. To get your check, please make sure you submit the following information to the Treasurer: Number of teams, number of games, referee fee per game (the fee per game can be found on the NASC website, www.nasoccerclub.org).

Communication with Coaches

Communication with your coaches is a very important responsibility of the AGC. Information from the Club must flow to coaches and parents through the AGC. If you do not relay information to the coaches, and they do not relay it to parents, parents may not get information they need for a fun and successful season. **Please communicate often with your coaches and reinforce that the Club expects them to communicate regularly with their parents.**

Prior to the season, the club will typically conduct a coaches meeting to talk about the season and to distribute equipment that is needed to conduct practices and games. During this meeting, the Club allows time for AGCs to meet with their coaches to discuss the upcoming season. An outline you may want to follow for your pre-season meeting is included in this manual as Attachment 1.

It is recommended that you compile an email distribution list of your coaches so that you can communicate with them easily throughout the year. An example of a pre-season email is included at Attachment 2. Feel free to use this template prepared for the U7 age group, but remember to edit it for your age group. As the season progresses, a weekly email to your coaches reinforcing sportsmanship and requesting feedback is a good way to keep in touch with your coaches. This will help keep you updated on any problems or concerns your coaches may have.

If the weather does not cooperate, you will need to assist coaches with rescheduling cancelled games. This requires communicating with the coaches, the Field Coordinator and the Referee Assignor. Once you have a field and a time for any make-up games, pass this information on to the Referee Assignor so that the referees can be notified.

At the end of the season, please collect feedback from your coaches and report it to the NASC Board so that improvements can be made each year.

Team Pictures

Some of our age groups like to do team pictures. This is at the discretion of the Age Group Coordinator. The Age Group Coordinator contacts a local photographer to take team pictures and arranges a date for picture day. Once the day has been confirmed with the photographer, it is important to notify the coaches so that all parents know in advance when picture day will be. Also, it is suggested that you arrange to get the order forms in advance so parents can fill these out. This will save time on picture day. Some photographers who have performed this service in the past are:

Acrees Gallery North
Scott Photography

724-898-2260
412-630-4620

www.acreesgallerynorth.com
www.jimscottstudio.com

Patches

Patches are issued to every player participating in NASC each season. The NASC Board selects the patch design and arranges for the production of the patches. When patches are received they will be distributed to Age Group Coordinators to provide to coaches. The Age Group Coordinator arranges to get patches to all coaches in the age group for distribution to the players.

Equipment Collection

It is important that you collect equipment from your coaches at the end of the season. Diligence in equipment collection helps the Club keep costs (and registration fees) down so soccer remains affordable for all NA families. Coaches can keep the game ball, but all other equipment should be returned. NASC will announce the date for equipment return and then have representatives at the equipment trailer at the McKinney Soccer Complex to collect equipment. Coaches should be encouraged to wash and clean equipment prior to turning it in on equipment return day. Head Coaches will receive their seasonal gift at the trailer when they return their equipment.

Coaches Gift

Each Head Coach participating in NASC receives a coaches gift when they return their equipment from the season. (U5 and U6 coaches are not issued equipment during the season, so they are not required to return equipment to get their gift.) Coaches gifts are distributed to coaches who return their equipment. They will be distributed from the trailer at McKinney Soccer Complex. Detailed information will be distributed to all Age Group Coordinators near the end of the season.

Final Thoughts

Thank you for agreeing to be an Age Group Coordinator. NASC could not function without you and your services as a volunteer are very much appreciated by NASC and the hundreds of kids in our program. We hope you will decide to be an AGC again next year, but if you are not able to volunteer again, please help us by recruiting a replacement and assisting them with their transition into the AGC position.

Thanks again for making soccer possible for all the kids in NASC!

Outline for Pre-Season Meeting

Thank You for Volunteering!

The NASC in house or recreational league places an emphasis on developing soccer skills, teamwork, sportsmanship and having fun. The league requires that all children get equal playing time and rotate positions. Scores, personal statistics and standings are not kept. There are no records, standings, or playoffs.

Team Volunteers

We need to encourage additional volunteers to join our ranks. Recommend 1-Head Coach; 2-Assistant Coaches; 1-Team Parent. Suggest a Team Parent be assigned that can assist with Orange/Snack Schedule, Photo Day, and Call Chain – particularly with last minute changes due to weather. It would also be nice to have a Field Monitor for each age group. Ideally, this individual would live near the assigned field and could check the field on the morning of the games in inclement weather, and communicate to the Board so a decision can be made about playability. The Field Monitor would also regularly check the field to make sure nets, sandbags, goals, etc. are adequate and functioning properly.

Team Development

In case you get questions, teams were developed using the following criteria. Any parental concerns, questions, or issues regarding team development not answered below can be forwarded to the Age Group Coordinator.

- Accommodating assistant coach requests.
- Accommodating friend requests
- Maintaining competitive balance among teams
- Assigning teams with consideration of neighborhoods/schools
- Accommodating special requests from parents (with focus on special circumstances).
- Balancing ages of players.

Zero Tolerance

- We hope most of us have never experienced a problem, let's keep it that way.
- No abusing of referees, coaches or players is tolerated.
- Coaches are responsible for team members and parents.

Referees

- Home team pays referee. All coaches will receive a check from the club for the appropriate amount to cover the expense of referees.
- Do not challenge or yell at referees during the games. Bring up issues at half time, after the game, or with the referee coordinator. Keep in mind most of the referees are young referees and are learning too.
- Identify good referees for recognition and provide feedback, both good & bad to the Director of Referees.
- Referees will check players before each game to make sure that only approved cleats are being used, that all players have shin guards, that no player is wearing earrings, jewelry or other hard hair items/hats that could cause harm to themselves or other players.

County Rules

- No Dogs, Alcohol, or Tobacco Products allowed at the fields.

Liability/Insurance Issues

- Inspect the field for any abnormalities that could create a dangerous situation for players.
- Inspect Goals to make sure they are properly anchored with sandbags. (Discourage anyone from hanging or playing on the goals – this is one of the leading reasons for soccer injuries.)
- Please make sure you have contact information for the parents on your team.
- Collect important allergy/medical information about your players.
- Have two adults present at all times, whether it is other coaches or parents.
- First Aid Kits – included in equipment bags. Recommend bringing bags of ice to games & practices.

Schedule

- Announce the following dates to your coaches:
- Field Day – clean up and set up of fields
- Practices begin
- Games begin
- Off days – Easter, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Spring Break, etc.
- Picture Day

Equipment

- Issue equipment to coaches in the U7 through U19 age groups.
- Confirm equipment in each bag. Typically the bag includes:
 - 1 Ball Bag
 - 1 First Aid kit
 - 6 - 10 Pinnies
 - 10 disks
 - 2 cones
 - 1 Goalie Helmet (U9/10 and older)

Inclement Weather

- FIRST - Check the NASC webpage to see if the club closes the field due to field conditions.
- SECOND – Coordinator's determination based on individual field condition or weather pattern.
- THIRD – Coach's determination.
- Lightning – If you see lightning, immediately pull the team off the field and find shelter. Play cannot continue until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike.

Game Day

- Home team wears gold
- Remind coaches where games will be played
- Remind coaches of the team size (7 v 7, 8 v 8, etc.)
- Remind coaches of length of each half
- Parents should sit on the opposite side of the field from the teams
- Encourage your players to bring a large bottle of water, particularly when the days get warm
- Try to keep games (and practices) fun
- Try to keep the games relatively close
- If a game is uneven please be considerate, display good sportsmanship, and refrain from running up the score. There are a number of things you can do to challenge your team which will benefit them more as soccer players than winning a lopsided game. Some things to consider if the score is beginning to run up:
 - Keep your best goal scoring players on defense.
 - Keep minimum three defenders on your side of the field.
 - Play one player short or allow the other team to play one up, if they have enough substitutes.
 - Require that your team put 3 (or more) passes together in sequence before they are allowed to shoot.
 - Play "2 touch" – your players are only allowed to touch the ball twice, a trap and a pass. This reduces dribbling and forces players to anticipate where they are going to pass the ball before they receive it.
 - Only permit shots with the weak foot.
 - We want all players to have fun; to develop soccer skills, to learn teamwork & sportsmanship, to have measured success, and to come back to us again next season and next year.

Season End

- Equipment must be returned to keep Club costs down. Assist with collecting equipment from coaches and coordinate return to NASC Director of Equipment.

Next Season/Year

- Our volunteer ranks are shrinking! Please encourage parents to volunteer when they register next season. If your player's parents like the way the program was run, encourage them to volunteer to keep it that way. If they were displeased, encourage them to volunteer to make it better. Constructive suggestions for improvement are always welcomed along with some brain/brawn to make it happen!

Again, thanks for volunteering and for the energy and enthusiasm you bring to providing soccer fun to the young members of our club.

ATTACHMENT 2

Sample Pre-Season Letter to Coaches

(Remember to edit this template so it is right for your age group.)

Dear Coaches,

Welcome to Spring 2010 NASC U7 Soccer.

Below are some basic guidelines for the games on Saturday as well as other useful information for new coaches. Please take the time to read this document as it will ensure some degree of consistency across teams and avoid game-day frustrations.

What your team needs: Please remind parents that they need to bring a water bottle, size 3 ball, shin guards, cleats. Check Team Roster on the webpage for contact info (login and check your account)

Practice Location/Time: Practices are on one weekday evening from 6-7pm. Coaches will be provided with this information as soon as it is available. On practice nights, it is generally up to the coaches to come up with the training for developing skills as well as preparing the kids for their games. There are lots of useful links to drills/fun games on the Coaches Tab at www.nasoccerclub.org if you are new to coaching.

Game Location/Time: All games are played on Saturday mornings at Yoeast 1 (McKinney Complex). Schedules will be emailed to each coach. Home Team = Gold Jersey, Away Team = White Jersey

Team Set-up: Games will consist of 20 minute halves with a break in the middle. The game is to be 4 vs. 4 on two short fields (marked with yellow lines) adjacent to each other. Since most of the teams have 10 or 11 children assigned this season, this means that 2-3 kids will be sitting on the sidelines. Coaches should split their teams into two sets. The coaches need to remember to substitute players to encourage everyone to get their share of "ball touches". After halftime, you switch sides with the other half of your team.

Basic Rules: In U7 we play a somewhat adapted game. There are to be no goalkeepers in U7. Given the size of the goal and U7 objectives of frequent ball touches, please do not have a player "hang out" in the back near the goal. You can play defense, but kids should defend the ball and not the goal. Please also don't have kids do the opposite and have players hang out near the opponent's goal while the ball is at the other end (ie. avoid having them be offsides). If the ball goes out of bounds, coaches should halt the play and pick a child to throw it in/corner kick/goal kick as appropriate. Kids seem to enjoy getting a chance to throw/corner kick and so the coach should pick who is to do it and give all kids a chance.

Coaches Role: In U7, one coach may be on the field at all times. It might be a good idea to bring a whistle so you can halt the play for out-of-bounds. Coaches are permitted to "guide the kids" - help in placement at the start of play or show kids where to throw in. However, please follow guidelines above for placement (ie. no goalies, etc.).

Half-time: After 20 mins, the teams re-group and have orange slices. The kids find this snack very refreshing!! Might be a good idea to remind parents to bring some wipes for those sticky hands and faces, as well as a bag for garbage. Please create a list (see below) and have parents sign up to take turns bringing in the orange slices for your team. Agree in advance with the other team's coaches as to whose team is going to switch sides for the second half.

Scoring: No scores are kept in U7. The primary objective is to have fun! Kids and parents are expected to respect each other on the field - aggressive physical or verbal behavior is to be discouraged.

End of game: Players should line up and two teams on the field and should congratulate each other/shake hands down the line. Please create a list (see below) and have parents sign up to take turns bringing in a snack/drink for after the game for your team. Some coaches remind the parent responsible for snacks each week.

Equipment: Each Head Coach will be provided with a bag of equipment on Field Day (March 27th) – cones, pinneys, first-aid kit, soccer ball. This is on loan to the coach for the season. If you have your own equipment or kept it from a previous season, that is fine. If your team is in need of equipment, please let the Coordinator know prior to your first practice. You might want to get a whistle so that you can get your players' attention.

Communication: In case games need to be cancelled due to weather or field conditions, a notice will appear on the NASC homepage by about 8am on Saturday morning. You can let your team know that they should check the webpage. You can also choose to either create a phone tree for your team or email/call your team in case of cancellations. On practice nights, coaches may decide whether or not to cancel.

Weather: If the weather is not that great during a game, the coaches are permitted to shorten the length of the halves in the interest of player comfort. If there is lightning and thunder during a game, we ask that you stop immediately. NASC follows a 30/30 rule for lightning. If thunder is heard less than 30 seconds after seeing lightening, you must clear the field. No one is allowed on the field until 30 minutes after the last occurrence of lightning.

Other reminders:

Please adhere to the following safety rules while playing:

- Do not allow anyone to hang or climb on any goals. This includes players, parents, siblings and any other friend or relative.
- Walk the fields and remove any debris, rocks, golf balls, and water bottles prior to the start of any game or practice.
- Most importantly, if you feel any condition is unsafe for the children playing, please get them off the field.

Coordinator Contact info:

Name
U7 Coordinator
Phone number
Email address

SNACK SCHEDULE:

	Half-Time Orange Slices	After-game Snacks/Drinks
April 3	No Games	No Games
April 10		
April 24		
May 8		
May 22		
April 17		
May 1		
May 15		
May 29	No Games	No Games
June 5th		