To: MNSA Community

From: Kirk Klinger, MNSA President (and Intramural Coach since 2003!)

CC: MNSA Board of Directors

Date: 08-29-14

Re: Pre season notes and review of end of 2013 survey results

Welcome to MNSA’s 2014 soccer season (our 36th season!). Our board has worked extremely hard to make sure that MNSA is ready for the 2014 season and for our 925 registered players (and counting….).

Hopefully, you will take the 20 minutes or so to read my thoughts and comments and review our end of 2013 season survey results. I assure you, it will not be boring (especially the comment section!).

This is my fourth and final season as MNSA President. It has been my honor to have been elected by the board and MNSA Community to serve and I hope that the 2015 election will be an opportunity for new voices to be heard. I have enjoyed all of my time on the MNSA board—as just a board member attendee (2004); then as Director of Equipment, then Board Secretary to President. Each position offered unique challenges. The 21 MNSA Board positions all fill a vital need (\*\*and our board is currently two board members short --Director of Publicity and Director of Equipment are both vacant and very important positions). PLEASE consider joining our board. Our 900+ players need you! MNSA is the LARGEST player participatory organization serving both Marple and Newtown Townships.

MNSA is comprised of several parts—Travel, Intramural, Micro/Petite and Indoor program (latter in partnership with Marple Sports Area). And the challenges are many.

* Like many other Delco youth sports leagues, field space is at a premium. While we are grateful to the MN School District for allowing us use of their school fields and Newtown Township for use of several of their fields; MNSA needs a dedicated space to call home—that many other local sports organizations have and other local townships have provided. A facility with a full sized turf field, storage facility and clubhouse is something that both MNSA and our local lacrosse organizations can someday have access to. Hopefully, someday, we will see this happen. Until then, we do the best with the facilities that are available to us.
* Parental volunteers to coach is always an on-going concern; we have yet to enter a season were we have all positions filled weeks before the season starts (as of this date we are still short three coaches) so, please volunteer. Coaching is not too difficult and we offer and provide lots of assistance in many different ways. Plus, it is incredibly rewarding.
* Parental behavior. This is by far, our biggest struggle and most immediate concern. While MNSA has ejected parents previously, our legal recourse is limited. We ask for everyone to remember that this is YOUTH sports and kids want to play and have fun (winning to the players is a distant third after playing time and having fun, just watch them after a game for confirmation of this!). We will continue to address this to the best of our ability, but, as with many things in life; peer pressure to behave is a very strong motivator.

Before I get to the survey (and address the comments!) I just want to say THANK YOU. Thank you for allowing me, personally; our board and our coaches to interact with your children. There is NO greater joy than seeing a smile on a child’s face—getting their uniform, their first goal, first save it’s just an amazing experience and I have been fortunate to coach for 17 years and counting. Thank you.

Now the survey. We put out a survey at the end of the 2013 season. We did so because we really did not receive a lot of feedback. Specific issues arise and are addressed as they occur, but nothing from the MNSA community in general. And attendance at our monthly board meetings (THIRD TUESDAY EACH MONTH AT THE GAUNTLETT CENTER!!!) is meager at best. So we issued the survey. We expected 50 responses (out of 947 registered players in the fall season). We were overwhelmed with 250+.

The majority of the questions (see the survey results, attached) were overwhelmingly positive—majority of responses received majority response of “Strongly Agree” and I will not take up your time with them. I will address the areas of concern (not in the majority of “strongly agree”). To wit:

* Q5—“The MNSA website is useful and easy to use”. The “agree” was the 43% majority. We have a new webmaster who has made some enhancements and is continuing to do so and has also created the MNSA facebook site. Please contact our webmaster directly for your suggestions!
* Q8—“I would purchase MNSA Spirit wear if available”. Agree was 38% majority. We did open a team store this year (closed on the 20th;  in partnership with B&E Sportswear) and will do so again based on support received. THANK YOU!
* Q21—Micro—“I was satisfied with the trainer. He/she added value to the Saturday sessions”. The “agree” was 41%. Our Micro and Petite trainers are high school students and the majority of those trainers played in MNSA and play soccer at the same time. Being teenagers, some are stronger than others; but the vast majority have represented MSNA extremely well.
* Q22—Micro—“I believe that the equipment and fields are adequate for the program”. The “agree” was 47%. As noted above, fields are something we have little or no influence on; but we do our best. As for equipment…any specific requests are welcome.
* Q25—Micro—“I would prefer more skill development”. The “agree” was 37% and “neutral” was 32%. We provide as much training as we can based on field availability and willingness of players/parents to attend. The past several years, we have offered free after season training on Saturdays at Gable and indoors at sports arena. Please see our website for more details!
* Q36—Intramural—“I believe equipment and fields are adequate for the program”. The “agree” was 45% and has been addressed previously.
* Q37—Intramural—“I believe officiating adequate for the program”. The “agree” was 47%. I will also address this in the comments section. We use youth referees in our intramural program. We do this for several reasons—to help them learn the game, to learn how to officiate (as the need for officials is great and pays well); but most importantly, to help them grow as people. They learn so much about life when they officiate—how to be decisive, how to be on time, how to act respectfully, how to deal with adverse situations and, sadly, how to deal with ignorant people. Our youth referees make mistakes just like the professional referees. We ask that our coaches (and parents and players) respect the position and the person.
* Q47—travel—“I believe fields and equipment are adequate for the program”. Again, addressed.
* Q6—“I would coach if there was a discounted registration fee”. “Neutral” was 46%.
* Q7—“I would serve on board if there was a discounted registration fee”. “Neutral” was 52%.
* Q13—“My child liked the participation award”. “Neutral” was 32%. The participation award last year was sweatbands and car magnet and handed out preseason. Previous participation awards included MNSA logo bags, water bottles, lunch bags, hats, scarves, etc…This year we did a larger logo bag that should hold a ball and water bottle. Will be handed out preseason. This was also one of the many “comments”
* Q23—“Boys and Girls should play on separate teams at the U7/Micro level”. “Neutral” 40%. We agree, but had to ask as many asked it of us. Boy and girls are separated at the intramural/pre novice/U8 level.
* Q24—“I would prefer more games”. “Neutral” 43% and “Disagree” 32%. We agree.
* Q25—“Should be weeknight sessions for Petite program”. “Neutral” 42% “Disagree” 29%. We do not have fields for petite so this is a good thing!
* Q52—travel—“I would pay increased registration fee for a turf field” This one was very split—“Neutral” 30%, “Disagree” 23%, “Agree” 19%, “Strongly agree” 16% and “Strongly Disagree” 11%. From board perspective, a turf field would open up many possibilities for our players (and for other MN youth sports programs such as lacrosse) This needs to happen.
* Q53—travel—“I would pay increased registration fee for paid coaches”. “Neutral” 31%. Again, split vote. Lower Merion and Montgomery have paid coaches and fee is $ 1,100 per player.
* Q54—travel—“I would pay increased registration fee for paid trainers”. “Neutral” 33%. Same.
* Q58—indoor—“I like indoor rink to be played with boards rather than without board (futsal)” The “neutral” as 61% (highest in survey).
* Q14—“I am aware that MNSA Board meets every third Tuesday of the month”. A resounding 32% “Disagreed”. We do and we will do a better job of communicating this to you!
* Q33—Intramural—“Parking at Russell Elem is adequate”. 26% “Disagreed” and 16% “Strongly Disagreed” and I could not agree with you more. We/I have tried to get the school district to allow us access the asphalt section by school—but they will not; they even chained us out last year. You need to contact your school board representatives to voice your concern. I do, every year.
* Q44—Intramural—“I would pay increased registration fee for better uniforms”. The 41% that disagreed and 10% that “strongly disagreed” will be pleased to know that we obtained “better” uniforms and without increasing the registration fee. Hope you like them!
* Lastly, Q11—“Interest in spring soccer league” was 36% “strongly agree”, 28% “agree”, 18% “neutral”, 14% “disagree” and 4% “strongly disagree” so we will look into it.

Now for response to comments (I will list the comment number and my response to same; to read the original comment please refer to the survey—sorry to make you work for it). Also, please note in regarding to negative comments in which an individual was named, we redacted that persons name.

* C1—We/MNSA are not allowed to perform any work on the MNSD fields. We have tried on multiple occasions to discuss without a response. Newtown TWP does allow us to work on TWP fields at Drexel Lodge and Krassas; and we are grateful for their permission (at no cost to the TWP I must add).
* C2—without the benefit of holding tryouts, the intramural program is not able to assign players to teams based on skill level. Thus we assign randomly for all divisions below U10 and we work very diligently to set up teams based on information available to us. That being said, there is and always will be a “strong” and a “weak” team—happens in every sport, every division. My team SR co-ed team finished 0-10 last year; we had a blast. Two year previously 10-0 and was very stressful. It all works itself out in the end.
* C3—MNSA agrees!
* C4—Thank you!
* C5—We put in a lot of effort
* C6—Thank you
* C7—see C3 and come to a board meeting and we can discuss
* C8—Yes, our Director of Registrations, Lynn S is awesome and we are lucky to have her!
* C9—Thank you
* C10—Please contact Kirk to discuss for ANY coaching issues. Would prefer to have this discussion “in season” so that it can be address and not lose kids to a negative coach (# 2 reason kids stop playing youth sports; right after #1 overbearing and abusive parents!!).
* C11—Thank you
* C12—Thank you—I do try my best to make it fun (see C2)
* C13—Please contact Kirk re adult soccer possibilities
* C14—Thank you!
* C15—Again, please speak up and we will address coaching issues during the season. If necessary we will replace a coach if situation has been deemed negative without improvement
* C16—If you have a specific player inquiry; please contact Kirk or appropriate division commissioner
* C17—Per MNSA board, travel playing time should be balanced if not equal. As all players have paid to play, all players deserve the opportunity to play. At the high school or premier club soccer level players are not guaranteed playing time. I hope that day never arrives at MNSA.
* C18—Brent T has been an excellent addition to our board and has done a fantastic job as intramural commissioner (and coach of several intramural boys teams).
* C19—Ron K is also our Director of Player Development and is responsible for the coordination of trainers for ALL of our divisions. The increased skill development that has been witnessed in our younger age groups is specifically due to Ron’s efforts to provide trainers for ALL MNSA players.
* C20—One two out of 250+ requested this; so contact Kirk to discuss.
* C21—Thank you
* C22—Thank you
* C23—MNSA would like to be able to offer both competitive soccer and training all year long; however, there is a significant lack of “all season/all weather” fields and buildings to accommodate same. Some day in the very near future, perhaps. Until then we do the best we can with what we have to work with.
* C24—Thank you
* C25—
* C26—This was the only registration process complaint that we received. I hope your issue was resolved; if not, please contact myself or Lynn
* C27—Thank you and see C22. ALSO, we do our best to address parental behavior issues and will continue to work to see that the sidelines are a positive and pleasant environment.
* C28—As discussed n my opening remarks, MNSA uses youth officials in our intramural program because we want to help your youth in many aspects as they grow up. If youcould see the difference in the referee between their first and third year you would see what we are talking about. Bob D/Director of Referees and myself spend a great deal of time both pre-season and in-season working with the referees. That being said, they will make mistakes (an incorrect call or non call); just like the professionals that everyone complains about! Sadly, there are adults who just don’t “get it” and yell and scream at our officials—simply not acceptable. In regards to specific comments regarding “replacement” of poor officials—we would prefer to continue to work with the young official. As for their affect to games, in the divisions that have playoffs we do our best to identify and select our stronger officials for “elimination” games. We can always do more, but it comes down to lack of time –so if you or anyone is willing to help train our officials please contact Bob or myself.
* C29—I will explain to you if you contact me; answer if involved.
* C30—So glad to hear it!
* C31--I agree! Please contact me to discuss
* C32—Thank you; that comment means a lot.
* C33—Thank you
* C34—I am not sure what you are refereeing to, please contact me to discuss.
* C35—Thank you
* C36—We have offered goal keeping clinics the past two years and both Ron K and myself have offered our services to coaches/teams for individual training (few have taken us up on offer). This year we have a travel coach, Matt H, who is running weekly travel GK clinics on FRI nights—and Ron and I will host intramural clinics as well during the season.
* C37—Thank you
* C38—Please come to our FEB board meetings; this is when we discuss and outline our budget.
* C39—Thank you
* C40—I am glad that your coach(es) was positive. Again, please contact us in-season when coaching /parental issues arise so we can address them.
* C41—Glad to there that a good time was had by players. We do paint lines weekly (micro) and twice weekly (intramural) so am not sure that issue was; please contact Kirk to discuss.
* C42—Thank you
* C43—Thank you
* C44—Best compliment; thank you!
* C45—We agree and “hoodies” were made available for purchase via team store—I bought one!
* C46—We still have some participation awards left; please contact Kirk if did not receive
* C47—YES; ALL coaches MUST pass a mandatory EPYSA sanctioned concussion awareness training (video, test, certificate). Parents can take this test to—http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/index.html
* C48—Second best compliment—thank you
* C49—See C46
* C50—Thank you
* C51—Thank you
* C52—Yes, Adam C is a wonderful coach (and former MNSA board member). Adam has four children playing MNSA and he coaches them all (with help from wife Laura). Dad of year!
* C53—Excellent to hear
* C54—Please contact Kirk to discuss
* C55—MNSA does not promote the purchase of trophies or medals by coaches for players; if there was any confusion on this, I apologize. We have sent out information regarding medals to our coaches from our vendors—perhaps this was the misinterpretation. On a positive side, many requested “medals” for our Micro/Petite group and we did include purchase of this in this years budget.
* C56—Please contact Kirk to discuss
* C57—See C46 C49 and C51
* C58—If MNHS will invite MNSA and work with MNSA to make it a true community night we will be there!
* C59—Glad that your sons had a positive time. We agree that parental behavior must improve. Regarding how we come up with our registration amount please attend our FEB board meeting to learn more.
* C60—Thank you
* C61—Thank you
* C62—Thank you
* C63—I am glad that your coaches were good for your children. MNSA issued trophies are at the Intramural level for the participant in the championship games for the U11 and above age groups.
* C64—MNSA does not involved itself in whether or what snacks should be given pre, during and post game. This is best addressed at a team level.
* C65—MNSA will be providing medals to our U7 and below age groups this year. Thank you for feedback.
* C66—Wow this was a detailed comment and deserves a detailed response. #1 MNSA keeps scores and standings only for age groups U9 and above and playoffs for same. We have been requested to keep them for the younger age groups and have respectfully declined same. #2 MNSA starts keeper training when we start using keepers (at U8) and will continue to work to improve this area. #3 Poor parental behavior is an ongoing concern. We deal with the situations as we are made aware of them and to fullest that we are permitted to legally do so. Sadly this is an issue throughout youth sports. We will continue to work on. #4 We offer training but cannot mandate the training as we struggle to fill all of our coaching slots as it is. #5 We agree and are working to see that this occurs.
* C67—Wow thank you!
* C68—Ron (board member) Bill (recent board member) Ed (board member) and Mike do a fantastic job as coaches and we are thrilled to have them in all of their capacities. I hope that they were able to address your assistant coach complaint; if not please send me more particulars and I will follow up.
* C69—Thank you
* C70—Yes, scheduling on our website needs to improve and we are working on it. Please check back in September
* C71—Thank you very much; we are proud to be entering our 36th year (circa 1979!)
* C72—Same as 71
* C73—so glad to hear
* C74—same as 73
* C75—same as 73
* C76—Wish you had provided more details; please contact Kirk or MNSA board in season to discuss
* C77—Please contact Kirk to discuss. I am not sure which team/division you are referring to
* C78—Thank you
* C79—Thank you
* C80—Yes, parental volunteers are not only greatly appreciate but necessary and vital
* C81—Am sorry you did not receive, please contact Kirk if still interested. MNSA does not offer playoffs at the U9 and below age groups
* C82—Please see C28 and C55
* C83—Awesome to hear!
* C84—I hope that you are still involved in MNSA and willing to contact Kirk to discuss; not enough detail in your comments
* C85—Thank you for coaching!