



## The Happy Soccer Book

A worldwide information booklet for youth soccer coaches and parents.

### **All Soccer Parents Are Good.** *(Some just don't know it.)*

We ask that **ALL** parents read this information, sign and return the **LAST PAGE ONLY**. Please note: There is a signature slot for 1 – 4 parents / guardians.

**We ask ALL who will be attending games to read COMPLETELY and sign.**  
(Not just one parent.)

#### **Do you know the number one reason children leave the sport of soccer?**

They simply decided they weren't having fun anymore.

A big cause of this?

#### **Parents that care too much.**

One of the biggest problems we have to deal with as parents is the fear of failure for our children. This is a good thing because it means we love them and care about them. However, because this is an EMOTION it can often get out of hand very quickly. This information will help you enjoy the game of youth soccer more and allow your children to love the game without undue parental pressure or fear.

It will also help deliver some needed "common rules and understandings" that keep everyone happy.

#### **Someone has to say it.**

There are many things that **NEED** to be said, but quite often we as coaches and parents don't say them. We want to "keep the peace" and make the sport fun, but it is often uncomfortable to say some things or get these messages to **ALL** the parents.

This booklet will help all involved in our great sport of youth soccer.

Of course, the ones that will benefit most are the **CHILDREN**. If you have an individual that is attending games and isn't following these "ground rules", simply hand them a copy of this booklet or email it to them. Share it with all the teams you play against as well. Remember, we all start off as **BAD** spectators; learning to be a good one takes practice.

#### **Are we late again?**

Please try and have your child to practices and games at least on time, if not early. Coaches spend a great deal of time prepping for practices and games. While they won't say it, being late kind of shows them you really don't appreciate their work. Showing up late also makes everyone else stop while drills are rearranged. Thanks for being on time.

#### **Do you have the right equipment?**

Let's face it, kids are kids. Many simply don't prepare and forget simple things that make a big difference. (Shin guards, water bottles, socks, balls, etc.) Please remember to check the gear and make sure they have it all. We highly recommend you teach your child to do this and make it their responsibility. A final check before leaving the house is a good idea.

## **We have to miss a game or a practice.**

There is a lot more to life than soccer. If you have an important family matter simply call the coach and let them know in ADVANCE. Spending an hour on lineups and then having to rework them at game time is not fun. Please try and let them know several days in advance.

## **Winning or Learning?**

What makes a good youth coach? One that says, "I don't care about winning, I want my players to develop skills and have fun." The problem is that we as parents often put pressure on coaches and players to win. We look at scores, records and points at much too young of an age. Let's face the TRUTH; winning is fun and losing stinks. However, both are equally valuable to the maturing child. (and parent) The main focus for youth players should be...

- 1- Have fun and build a love for the game.
- 2- Improve and mature as an individual and grow their soccer skills.
- 3- It's not about winning or losing. The questions should be: Did we learn from it?

## **What is said after the game?**

Please make sure that you ALWAYS keep a positive attitude after the game. (Both in the car and at home.) It is MUCH too easy to start talking about a bad ref or something a player or coach, "should have done". It's a GAME silly. Life goes on so enjoy it. Ignore the negative and talk about the positive. If a child starts talking negative, ask them to make 2 positive comments about the game. ("It is over" is not a positive comment.) Always point out positive performance issues and not the result of a match.

## **"That stupid Ref!"**

Did you know that most youth referees are learning just like your child? Did you know they often have to do 3 times the work as a professional referee? Most pro games have a ref and 2 sideline officials. Most youth games only have one ref and they have to do it all.

Never, and we mean never, criticize a ref for making mistakes or bad calls.

Guess what? There is a good chance that the ref's parents or of even wife and children are sitting next to you. Speak as though the ref's 8 year old child is sitting next to you. Our sport is losing more and more referees every year because of parental comments, criticism and shouting. If you can't stop complaining about the ref's, we suggest that you become one. You will never shout out a negative comment again if you do.

## **Sideline coaching?**

One of the key elements of a youth player developing is their ability to make decisions on the field. This means making good choices and bad ones too. Players should **NEVER** listen to any one during the match except 3 people.

- 1- Their coach.
- 2- The referee.
- 3- Their teammates.

Parental coaching or "side line coaching" should be ignored by players on the field.

Also realize that there are other parents sitting quietly on the sides trying to enjoy the game.

Sitting next to the "loud parent" is a horrible experience and takes away from the beauty of our game.

Parents should...

Offer praise and applause for good plays and good behavior for their team.

Offer praise and applause for good plays and good behavior for the OTHER team.

They are all kids and trying their best. Let them know you appreciate it.

## **Thank the other team.**

We often encourage our children to show good sportsmanship and at the end of the match shake hands with the other team. Not a bad idea to pass on to the ADULTS as well. Make sure you

thank the other parents and coaches. As players leave the field, congratulate the other team's players too.

If any negative comments are made from the opponent's parents or coaches, simply BITE YOUR TONGUE and offer a smile. Remember, it's only a game and there are too many other issues in life to deal with. If this happens we recommend you email a copy of this booklet to the other teams coach or program.

### **Did you know that a hand ball is legal?**

Many parents shout out infractions they think the ref is missing.

The problem?

Many parents do not know the rules of the game.

As an example...

Many "hand balls" in youth soccer are not intentional and therefore not called. Children simply turn away from shots and the shot strikes their arm or hand. This is not a handball. There needs to be some intent to stop or deflect the ball. Simply protecting your "face" is not **intent** to change the play. Youth refs understand this and allow many such calls to go. "Let them play", should be the rule. Spend some time learning the rules and understand that in youth soccer there is always a little flexibility.

### **Why did he take Tommy out? Why is Susie playing forward, she's a defender?**

Good youth coaches know that all children should have equal playing time. They should also have the experience of playing different positions. This often may cause us to lose a game or two. Guess what? That is youth soccer so get use to it. This is part of the growing and learning experience and is vital in our sport.

### **Can I stand on the sideline?**

The sideline or touchline is the long side of the field border. Many youth fields now have a separate "spectator line" which is about 6 feet away from the sideline. This is for safety. If your fields do not have a "spectator line" please stay 6 feet away from the sideline at all times. Please make sure objects such as chairs and coolers are also this distance away as they can cause serious injury.

(Note: Parents are not allowed on the coaching side of the field.)

### **I have a problem. Should I talk to the coach?**

If there is ever a problem with a child, parent or anyone around the fields, please feel free to talk to the coach. That is the right place to start. If you have a problem with the coach, do not address it with other parents or players. Talk to the coach about in private later that week.

### **Little Timmy got hurt!**

Nothing "yanks at the heart" like a child getting hurt during a game. However, there are some rules to follow.

- 1- Never run onto the field if your child or another is hurt. The ref will address the situation and if needed the next action is to call out the coach to field. The injury will be reviewed by the coach and if additional care is needed he will make sure it is handled.
- 2- Any injury during a game should be reported to the coach. He should file an injury report to the league or administration.
- 3- If your child has any medical conditions please make sure you let everyone know.
- 4- If your child has an injury before a game or practice, please make the coach aware of it.

### **He's a coach, not a babysitter.**

It is common for parents to drop off kids at practice and then pick them up afterwards. Please make sure you are on time to pick them up. While the coaches care about ALL the kids, constantly staying late waiting on THAT parent gets old. Don't be THAT parent.

On the similar issue, a coach should never leave a child alone during or after practice. Children should not be allowed to leave practice unless the parent is there to pick them up. If an emergency comes up, please let the coach know.

### **The behavior issues?**

Coaches have a tough role. Not only do they have to deal with their players, they have to deal with parents, league administrators, refs and other coaches. (Not to mention their kids, spouse, job, etc.) From time to time coaches need to deal with behavior issues. This is often done between player and coach directly, but don't be offended or shocked if the coach asks you to get involved in dealing with your child. It's simply a part of growing up and makes the coach's job a little easier.

### **Soccer homework?**

Most youth soccer coaches agree.

We wish we had more practice time.

We encourage all parents to spend time with their child at home working on basic skills such as dribbling, passing, juggling, and just getting the feel of the ball on their feet. This "soccer homework" not only helps the player improve, but also creates a great bonding growth between parent and child. ALWAYS keep these sessions fun and never demand it or use it as punishment.

One of the best "home games" for the younger player?

### **Soccer Maze – Soccer Mine Field**

It only takes an area of about 10 feet x 10 feet.

Set up cones or anything similar. (Plastic or paper cups work great.)

Spread them out randomly so they are approximately 2 - 3 ft apart.

One person at a time starts.

Touch the ball with every step while moving forward, backward and sideways.

Use both feet and every side of the foot. (Laces, inside, outside and sole.)

See how many touches they can make without letting the ball touch a cup or cone.

Next it is Mom's or Dad's turn.

This game is great fun, works on essential ball touches and creates a great ball handler.

(Loser has to take out the trash or do dishes.)

Kids will play this game for hours and not even realize how much they are improving their touch and dribbling skills.

We hope you learn to love the game as much as we do.

If you have ANY questions, always ask.

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## ONLY RETURN THIS PAGE

**We have ALL read and understand the booklet.  
Thanks for coaching.**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments or questions below: