



# A Parent's Guide to Soccer

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the North Allegheny Soccer Club's answer to those soccer questions you were always too afraid to ask. Or didn't care to ask. We produced this short "manual" for when you attend that new National Pastime - the Saturday morning soccer game – so you will actually have GREAT KNOWLEDGE of what those kids are doing (or attempting to do) out on that wet, soggy, muddy, snow-covered (fill in appropriate adjective) field.

We hope you will enjoy reading this guide. We hope you **read** this guide! In it you will find explanations of the Laws of soccer (note the capital "L" in Laws - that's because they are pretty important stuff), and the policies (yes, we have them) of NASC. Now, the first test is to see if you are paying attention - do you remember what NASC stands for?

## HOW CAN I HELP WITHOUT REALLY TRYING?

First we would like to thank you, the parents, for your involvement in the North Allegheny Soccer Club. We encourage all you parents to get involved with your kid's team at practices and at games. We will show you some guidelines on what we really mean by involvement. Below you will find some suggestions on what might be considered helpful to your young soccer player's psyche, and also might keep you from getting thrown off the field.

1. Our young players need support from their coach, from their teammates, and particularly from **you**. Our highly trained and motivated coaches will do their part. Your ENTHUSIASM for each practice and game will be CONTAGIOUS to your child. *Please be punctual for practices and games!*
2. Don't assume a practice or game is canceled just because there is a monsoon brewing or it's been snowing for a few days straight. Cancellations will be decided by the coach for practices and by a soccer board member for games.
3. You can best help the coach by introducing yourself at the first practice. Let him or her know of any special information that may pertain to your child (wearing of contacts, any allergies, etc.) Many coaches can identify some kids' parents only by the make of the car they drive as they slow to shove the kid out the door at the edge of the field.
4. As you have probably already discovered, soccer games can be very exciting. Only the most passive parent will not become emotionally involved in the game. When you do, we ask that you confine your comments (screams) to the positive. We've seen certain Mom's jumping up and down, shrieking at the Referees, certain Dads bellowing out at his kid (trying to "coach" him or her) to no avail. This does not help your kid or your reputation in the stands. You know who you are.
5. Speaking of Referees, please keep in mind that he or she is in charge of the game. Realize that they are human (unlike baseball umpires), and sometimes make mistakes (like baseball umpires). But, historically, most of the dissent in a soccer game is not caused by a Referee problem, but as a result of people not understanding the laws of the game, and how they are applied. We will take care of that for you if you just keep on reading...



## WERE LAWS MADE TO BE BROKEN?

To fully enjoy watching (and playing) soccer, it helps if you have a basic understanding of the rules. So read on to achieve that basic understanding. Also, if you read this and retain most of it, you will appear pretty smart if the "Laws -of- Soccer" subject comes up at your next formal dinner party.

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

It's a big rectangular field with goals at either end. The size of the field gets bigger as your kids get bigger. Pretty easy so far. There is an area in front of the goal called the goal box. This is primarily used for goal kicks. The ball may be placed anywhere inside the box for a goal kick. The bigger box is the penalty area. It's an area that extends 18 yards from the goal line on a full sized field (called the 18-yard line). Very easy, huh? This area is where the goalkeeper is allowed to pick up the ball. Also, in this area, if a defender commits a foul deserving a direct free kick (for the list, see Law 12) the Referee awards the opposing team a penalty kick. (Hence the name!)

The sidelines are called TOUCHLINES. This is because when the ball goes across the line it is now "in touch" i.e. the players may now touch the ball with their hands (for a throw-in). Get it?

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

This is real easy. It's round. We use three sizes of soccer balls. Size 3 for Under-6 to Under-8, size 4 for Under-10 to Under-12, and size 5 for all older age groups. Check the sporting goods aisle for comparisons.

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

We play from 3 players in Under-6 to 11 players in Under-12 and above. That's easy. The confusion seems to arise as to when the coach can SUBSTITUTE players (i.e. finally put your kid in the game). Except for under-8 and younger games, substitutions normally may only be made at the following times:

1. When EITHER team has been awarded a GOAL KICK or
2. Before YOUR team's THROW-IN.

The coach may also substitute after play has been stopped for an INJURY, and the injured player comes off the field. The opposing team may also sub one player at that time. The other times for subs are at the beginning of each period, and after a goal is scored. Oh, one more thing about subs for our league - NO SUBSTITUTING BEFORE CORNER KICKS! Whew!

### **Law 4: Players' Equipment**

Each player needs to look cool. The only way this will happen is to have THE SAME uniform (shirt, shorts, and socks) as their teammates. The goalkeeper has to look really cool, so his or her shirt must be a different color than the other players. (That's really so the Referee can tell who in the crowd may pick up the ball).

All players are required to wear shin guards, and although jewelry, such as earrings, watches, necklaces, rings, barrettes, nose rings, etc., look fabulous off the field, they need to be OFF for the game. Earrings are sharp and can cause injury if hit by a soccer ball. Taking them out for 45 minutes won't cause them to close up. Soccer shoes are not specifically required, but shoes must be safe for play. That means they provide enough traction for the conditions so the wearer won't get hurt and they also don't have anything which could injure another player, such as a toe cleat like on a baseball shoe or a stiletto heel.

## **Law 5: Referees**

As we stated earlier, the Referee is in charge of the game. Whether he or she is 12 years old or 50 years old, their word is LAW. The laws were designed to provide that games be played with as little stoppage as possible. In this view, it is the duty of the Referee to penalize only DELIBERATE breaches of the law (and that determination can be subjective - did the kid on the red-shirt team deliberately kick the kid on the white-shirt team in the teeth?).

Another way the Referee can keep the game moving is to apply the ADVANTAGE RULE (not to be confused with a stacked team). The advantage rule allows the Ref to keep the game in play after a foul has been committed if, in his judgment, the player or team who was fouled is better off keeping the ball than getting a free kick. Example: A player on the red team **pushes** an opponent (on the white team) who is dribbling the ball up field (normally penalized by a direct free **kick**). The ball bounces ahead to another the white-shirt player, who can freely pass the ball to a teammate or shoot on goal. The Ref should hold both hands out with palms up and call, "Advantage, play on", so the white-shirt team doesn't have to stop and both teams regroup for a free kick. The referee may wait a few seconds before blowing the whistle to see if an advantage will play out. If the advantage doesn't play out, he will stop play and the kick will take place where the offense occurred.

So, you see a foul committed (against your kid, of course) and the referee doesn't blow the whistle. You scream for a foul, and the ref finally blows the whistle! News Flash...You had no influence on the call. Most likely he called advantage, but the advantage didn't play out, so he blew the whistle and gave the offended team the free kick. Let him do his thing.

One more thing about Referees; They have the authority to eject any player, coach or PARENT from the field if necessary.

Remember this is a developmental league. Other than maybe your child, every player on the field and probably the coach as well, will make at least one mistake during the game. Referees, especially new ones, may make mistakes as well. Get over it! Rarely does it affect the outcome of the game and it's only a game!

## **Law 6: Assistant Referee:**

Assistant referees assist the Referee (hence the name) in controlling the game. However, the Referee is the final authority. Assistants are primarily responsible for signaling balls that go out of play, signaling fouls the referee does not see, and calling offside. They also look quite cool.

## **Law 7: Duration of the Game**

Forever, if you don't watch and "get into the game". Otherwise, time goes by pretty fast:

Under 6: 5- minute periods. (As many as can be played in scheduled time).

Under 7 & 8: Two 20 minute halves. (5-min. half).

Under 9 & 10: Two 25-minute halves.

Under 11 & 12: Two 30 minute halves

Under 13 & 14: Two 35 minute halves



## **Law 8: Start of Play**

When they kick the ball, right? Yes, but it must travel in a forward direction (no specified distance). If it doesn't move forward, they will kick off again. (This is why kickoffs are done over.) And the player who kicks off can't touch the ball again until someone else has touched it. If she does, the other team gets an indirect free kick.

### Law 9: Ball in and Out of Play

Sometimes you see parents jumping up and down, screaming at the moronic, half-witted, blind Referee that the ball was clearly out of bounds, and actually thinking they are correct. That's because they haven't read this manual. The ball is out of play when it has COMPLETELY (the whole ball) crossed outside the touchline (sideline) or the goal line either in the air or on the ground. A player MAY RUN OUTSIDE the touchline to play the ball.

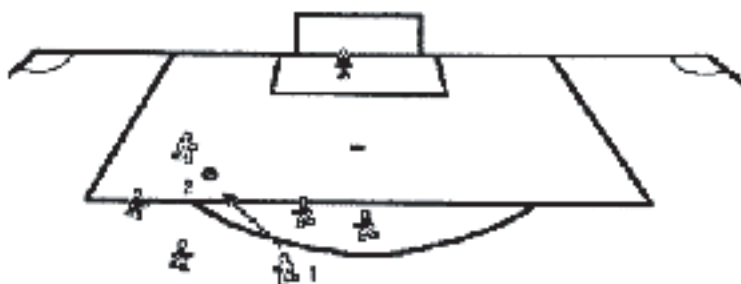
### Law 10: Method of Scoring

For a goal to be scored, the ball must cross COMPLETELY over the goal line between the posts and under the crossbar. You're starting to get the picture now.

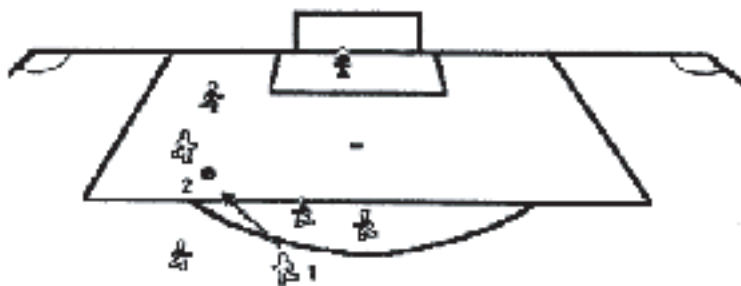
### Law 11: Offside

If your kid is playing U-6 to U-10, skip this section. If your kid is playing U11 or older, take two aspirin and read on. The offside rule was enacted to prevent players from "cherry picking", that is, hanging around in front of the goal waiting for the ball to pop through the defense. Basically, a player should not be ahead of the ball (closer to the opponent's net) **when the ball is played** in his direction by a teammate, unless he has two opponents (i.e. the goalkeeper and one defender) between him and the goal. Of course there are exceptions. A player cannot be offside on his side of the field, nor if he receives the ball directly from a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick or drop-ball. One more thing, and then you can stare at the awesome diagram. The offside is judged at the moment the ball is PLAYED by his teammate, not when the player receives it. Also -read carefully - a player can be in an OFFSIDE POSITION and NOT CALLED FOR IT, if in the opinion of the referee, the player was not gaining an advantage by being there (i.e. not in the play or effecting the outcome of the play in any way). Now that you have read this, you should read it again. Now, read it again, because it can be confusing. Now, you should find a book or put "law 11 Offside" into your browser search engine to find more information than you good ever want on the offside law. You can visit <http://www.fifa.com> to download the FIFA Laws.

(<http://www.uefa.com/TrainingGround/Refereeing/index.html> has interactive examples of the offside rule as well) Also, go watch a few travel games with U-14 or older to see how the referees call it. Offside is the most complicated and difficult law to understand, but the most important think to remember as a parent is it only gets called when in the opinion of the referee it is violated. Not in your opinion!



Offside: Player 2 is offside as there is only one opponent between him and the goal.



Onside: Here, Player 2 is onside as there are two opponents between him and the goal.

## Law 12 Fouls and Misconduct

The following ten offenses must be judged *to be careless, reckless or using excessive force*, and will result in the hanging of the offender from the nearest oak tree. Just seeing if you were paying attention - these offenses, will result in a **DIRECT** free kick (that means the ball can be kicked directly into the goal for a score without anyone else touching the ball). If a player:

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

Note that all of these fouls basically involve physical contact with an opponent. A direct free kick will be awarded to the opposing team at the place where the offense occurred.

A **Penalty kick** is awarded if any of the above ten offenses is committed by a player inside his own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball, provided it is in play.

The following offenses will result in an **INDIRECT** free kick.



If a goalkeeper inside his own penalty area:

- Takes more than six seconds while holding the ball
- Touches the ball again with his hands after he releases control of it and it has yet to be played by another player
- Touches the ball with his hands after it was deliberately kicked (passed with feet) to him by a team-mate
- Touches the ball with his hands after he has received it from a throw-in taken by a teammate.
- Wastes time

An indirect kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player:

- Plays in a dangerous manner (kicking a ball after falling down is not necessarily dangerous play)
- Impedes the progress of another player (no "picks" allowed in soccer)
- 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 issue a red or yellow card.

A player is *cautioned* and shown a *yellow card* if he or she commits any one of the following offenses:

- Is guilty of unsporting behavior
- Shows dissent by word or action
- Persistently infringes the Laws of the Game
- Delays the restart of play (i.e. by kicking the ball away after the whistle for a foul he committed, etc...)
- Fails to respect the required distance for the opposing teams' free kick or corner kick
- Enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission
- Deliberately leaves the field of play without the referees permission

A player is **sent off** and shown a **red card** if he or she commits any one of the following offenses:

- Is guilty of serious foul play
- Is guilty of violent conduct
- Spits at an opponent or any other person
- Denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to the goal-keeper, of course)
- Denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free or penalty kick
- Using offensive, insulting or abusive language
- Receives a second caution in the same game

Whew! That was quite a list, huh? Remember that the Laws are designed to ensure a safe environment for all involved. The referee should keep the game moving without blowing the whistle at what he or she judges to be unintentional. That brings us to the "hand ball" issue. Notice that in Law 12 there is no such foul as "hand ball". There is a mention of "intentional handling" of the ball. If the ball is kicked pretty hard and strikes someone's hand, and he or she makes no attempt to play the ball with their hand, then there is no foul. If, on the other hand (ha ha), the hand goes to the ball, you can pretty much expect to hear the whistle. **Did the ball play the hand (NO Foul) or the hand play the ball (FOUL!)?**

There are some other circumstances when you will see fouls called. For instance, if the goalkeeper wastes time with the ball in his hands (more than 6 seconds). For more information on fouls and punishment (if you are truly a sadist), you can read and memorize the handbook F.I.F.A./USSF Laws of the Game or visit: <http://www.fifa.com> or <http://www.drblank.com/slaws.htm>

If you think you see a that a foul has been committed, and the lousy, stupid, blind Referee doesn't stop the play, before you yell and scream at him, open this manual up and reread Law #5 (Advantage Rule).

### **Law 13 Free Kicks**

If you see a player about to take a free kick, you may wonder if it is DIRECT or INDIRECT. Look at the Referee. If one of his arms is raised, he is not testing his new deodorant. He raises his arm before an INDIRECT kick and keeps it raised until another player (of either team) touches the ball. All other kicks are DIRECT. Remember, on a DIRECT free kick, a player can score a goal by kicking the ball directly into the net. On an INDIRECT kick, the ball must touch any other player (of either team) before a goal can be scored.

### **Law 14 Penalty Kicks**

If a player, **in his own penalty area**, commits one of those heinous crimes that result in a DIRECT free kick, a PENALTY kick will be awarded to the other team. This is also about the time his coach wishes corporal punishment was still legal. The kick is taken from the penalty spot, just inside the penalty area. All players except the goalie and the kicker must be outside the penalty area and *behind the penalty spot*. The goalkeeper may not move *forward* until the ball is kicked. If he saves it, he deserves a big cheer.

### **Law 15 Throw-In**

Here is a simple rule and a simple procedure that always seems difficult to get right. If the ball goes out of bounds across the touchline (sideline, right?), it is thrown in where it left the field. The thrower must face the field, and have BOTH FEET ON THE GROUND, on the line or behind it. The ball must be thrown from BEHIND and OVER the HEAD with both hands. If the players in U-6 or U-8 don't get it right, they may try again. In U-10 and older, an improper throw-in awards the ball to the other team.

## Law 16 Goal Kicks

If the **ATTACKING** team last touches the ball before it goes over the **GOAL LINE** (except within the uprights of the net- that's good!), the defensive team takes a goal kick from anywhere within the goal area. The ball must travel outside the penalty area to be in play (if not, they should kick it again).

Players will not be called off-side if they receive the ball directly from a goal kick. All players from the opposing team must remain outside of the penalty area until the ball is kicked.

## Law 17 Corner Kicks

If the **DEFENSIVE** team last touches the ball before it crosses the goal line, the attacking team is awarded a corner kick from within the closer corner arc. Opposing players must be 10 yards from the corner kick. Teammates can not be called offside when receiving the ball directly from a corner kick.

Remember that the laws of the game are designed for players' safety, fair play, to keep the game moving, and for everyone's enjoyment. So, now that you have a **FULL UNDERSTANDING** of the Laws of Soccer, have a great time watching and cheering (both teams!)!!!



***Here are a few terms and definitions that may be of help to you while enjoying a game. You can right down some on your wrist or just take this manual along to the game.***

**Advantage** 1. When the Referee decides not to give a free kick to a team because a stoppage would mean the team would lose the advantage they may have gained. 2. What you have when your good friend is making up the team rosters.

**Caution** If you commit any one of the cautionable offences listed in Law 12, you receive a caution (Yellow Card). If you repeat any of these things after receiving a yellow card, you will be ordered off the field (Red Card), and you cannot be replaced. That's bad.

**Charging** 1. The maneuver of using a shoulder against an opponent's shoulder to gain an advantage. 2. What Americans like to do instead of paying.

**Cross** A pass from one side of the field to the other, usually near the goal.

**Goal Area** ( Or six-yard box). The area in front of the goal where goal kicks are taken.

**Offside** Didn't you get enough of this? See Law 11.

**Offside Position** OK, one more time. You are usually in an offside position if you are ahead of the ball, and there are not two opponents between you and the goal. However, if your team is not gaining an advantage from it (i.e. you're not in the play), the Ref won't call it. Even if you are in an offside position, you won't be called offside if you receive the ball directly from a throw-in, corner kick, goal kick or a drop ball. Enough, enough!

**Penalty Area** The marked-out area in which the goalkeeper may handle the ball, and where a penalty kick will be awarded if a defender commits an offense normally penalized by a Direct free kick.

## Players Positions

**Center Forward** - The center player in the offensive attack, usually the Coach's kid, who scores all the goals. Sometimes called the "striker".

**Forward** - A "forward" player in the team formation. Duh! Could be a left or right wing.

**Midfielder** - A player whose job is to feed forwards with passes, control the middle, and to help the defense. Also known as a "halfback". Usually the kid who doesn't mind running for 30 minutes straight.

**Defender** - Player whose major responsibility is to prevent the other team from scoring. Also referred to as a Fullback.

**Goalkeeper** - Some kids would rather do this than take a trip to Disney World. Others suddenly get the flu when the coach asks them to stop a few kicks. Also called the "Keeper"

**Sweeper** - A roving, dependable player who backs up the defense.

**Winger** - Someone who plays on the extreme right or left of the attack (one of those forwards).

**Tackling** Taking the ball away from an opponent by using the feet. You can do it while running or sliding to the ground. Not supposed to be anything like a football tackle.

**Throw-In** The method of restarting the game after the ball has crossed the touchline. The ball must come from behind and over the head with both hands. Both feet must stay on the ground while throwing the ball.

**Touchline** The sideline. You MUST know that by now!

**Wall** A group of at least two defenders, in a position against a free kicker near the goal. The human "wall" must be 10 yards from the ball or on the goal line.

**Wow** What you will say when you see the whole team work together to put the ball in the goal!

## TEN THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP A COACH

1. Deliver your child to practices and games on time.
2. Say only positive things on the sidelines.
3. Communicate with the coach - but not on the field.
4. Don't shout instructions to your child during the game.
5. Call the coach if your child is going to miss a game or practice.
6. Don't allow sleepovers or late movies the night before a game.
7. Focus on effort, not winning.
8. Support the coach, especially regarding lineup and discipline.
9. Feed the kids before games and practices.
10. Write the coach a thank-you note. Better yet, have your child write one.

