

Shepaug Futbol Club (SFC)

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Mission Statement

The mission of Shepaug Futbol Club (SFC) is to lay the foundation for starting soccer players and lead them through various developmental stages including those that focus on a complete set of technical skills, positional play and tactics, and the nuances of competition. In addition, we strive to foster a strong sense of team spirit on all of our teams, and promote good sportsmanship. Last, and most importantly, is that we place a strong value on each player, and are committed to providing a high level of training and attention to each young athlete, regardless of skill level or experience. We believe that each player and soccer family brings something special to the team. We are a soccer community.

Year Round Soccer for the Greater Shepaug Region

SFC serves all residents of the Shepaug region, as well as families and players in nearby towns. We are a four-season soccer club providing soccer instruction and play for boys and girls from Beginner (age 3-6) to U8, and all competitive levels of travel soccer from U9 to U19. We offer travel teams for U9 - U15 teams in the fall and spring, and an additional U16/19 travel team in the spring season. We also offer training programs in the winter as well as summer camps. Last, we are exploring opportunities that would allow interested players to compete in tournaments and premier leagues that go beyond our normal league competition.

Board of Governance

SFC is headed by a board of elected volunteers. Meetings take place upon agreed times approximately every two months and as needed during the competitive season. In addition, we hold one annual meeting open to parents and members of the community, during the off-season.

League guidelines suggest that our board includes eight (8) members. Of those 8, necessary positions include the following, for which anyone can volunteer or request a nomination in the event that there are multiple candidates for a position:

President
Vice President
Treasurer
Secretary
Registrar
Additional board members (3)

In addition, the following positions are vital to the operation of the club.

- Ref-assignor/field coordinator (includes a stipend)
- Uniform manager - maintains a spreadsheet of distributed uniforms by size, number and issue date

- Player Development Coach (includes a stipend)
- As needed professional coach(s) in addition to Player Development Coach for upper levels
- **Team managers are highly desirable - and can make a huge difference.** By a team manager, we are referring to someone that will take over the organizational aspects of the team such as setting up games with other coaches, confirming referees for games, establishing and communicating a weekly schedule and so on. In this way, a team manager, who may not have soccer experience, allows the head coach to focus on the tasks of establishing practice plans, running practices and guiding players through their soccer development.

Program Fees and Expenses

SFC is a federally approved **non-profit organization** and eligible for charitable donations. We also welcome team sponsors, whose contributions allow us to offer the best possible programs. Donations and sponsorships allow us to offer the best possible training and make our programs available to all families, as we are committed to providing opportunities for those in financial need and helping them develop as players and be a part of our program.

SFC mainly relies upon registration fees stemming from participation on travel teams, and winter and summer programs. Registration fees are established and posted approximately 3 months prior to each season, which gives parents and guardians ample time to register. In addition to the income generated from these fees, donations and a yearly fundraiser help to offset a number of operational costs that include:

- Uniforms (including replacement as needed)
- Professional coaches for upper levels and off season programs
- Payment of referees
- Field maintenance including mowing and lining. SFC contributes toward field maintenance at Bridgewater Recreation Area, Shepaug's Lower Field, Booth Free School, Shepaug JV Field
- A club website
- Soccer goals and flags
- Portalets at some locations

Composition of Teams/League Rules Governing Competition

All of our travel teams compete in the Northwest District League (NWD) hosted by the Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA). As such, the rules governing the composition of our league and teams, as well as the rules that apply to competition are those established by the CJSA/NWD governing boards.

In terms of roster composition, the CJSA establishes a cutoff date in which a player must be born on or before in order to compete in a given age group. Except in rare circumstances, players are not allowed to compete at levels designated for younger players. They may "play up" with permission and documentation from their club administrators.

In any given season, SFC will make every effort to offer a team for each age range. (E.g. U9, U10, U11, etc.). However, an inadequate number of players for a given age range may result in the combining of age groups, resulting in some players "playing up". Please note that this is a common practice even for larger communities and clubs.

The league also establishes guidelines that vary among age levels for the size of fields and goals, length of games, size of balls, number of players per age group, required amount of playing time and more. For further info see <http://www.nwdteams.com/>

SFC Coaching

No factor has a greater impact on teams than the professionalism and approach of the team coaches - particularly the head coach. While coaches, aside from our Player Development Coach and upper level head coaches, are volunteer positions, they are vital. And, coaching can provide intrinsic rewards for the coach as well as the team. That said, a set of standards that includes the following must be met.

Most important is that we place the emotional and physical well-being of our players ahead of a desire to win at any cost. We expect that all players will be encouraged to do their best, affirmed when doing so, and spoken to with respect always. The tone set by the head coach is paramount to the well being of the team. In addition, the physical well being of players is to be looked after by ensuring that:

- Field and weather conditions are safe
- Regular water breaks are provided
- Players are properly equipped before they take the field
- Rough housing before or after practice is disallowed
- Taunting and bullying is forbidden
- All athletes have a ride home after practice

In terms of player and team development, SFC is grounded in our commitment to the physical, technical, and tactical development of every player, individually and as a member of their team. By the fall of 2023 we expect all head coaches to complete, at minimum, the grassroots US soccer coaching course (<https://www.ussoccer.com/coaching>), and expect spring coaches to do the same.

While the club relies upon and welcomes the inclusion of parent coaches, especially those with soccer backgrounds, ongoing certification and training as well as familiarity with the sequence of skills and tactics emphasized by our player development coach help bring a quality of cohesiveness and ease of transitions from level to level. In an effort to ensure this, from time to time, our Player Development Coach will provide training sessions for coaches, or visit and assist practice sessions upon prior arrangement.

A head coach that has met the club's professional and certification standards in coaching during a particular season (e.g. spring), will be given preference should they express interest in returning as head coach for the following season (e.g. fall). However, in instances where there are more than one certified candidate seeking a head coaching position, we recommend a sharing of responsibilities, which can yield great benefits to coaches and players. While there can only be one designated head coach, each team can accommodate up to 3 assistant coaches, and coaches and managers are strongly encouraged to work out a system of shared responsibility which may take advantage of specific strengths that coaches bring to the program.

In terms of practices and game play, coaches (and managers) must ensure that:

- A weekly email is sent to parents (preferably on a Sunday night or after your weekend game) that confirms the following week's practices and games including times and locations.
- Rosters are accurate, and that only registered and rostered players, or those otherwise having permission from the club president, or vice president, or other designee
- All players receive equal or adequate playing time, depending upon the league rule for the age group at hand
- Double rostering (players from lower teams playing up) is permitted per written permission of parents and coaches involved, especially in cases where a team may

be short of players or have an inadequate number of subs. However, the playing time of a person double rostering should not be at the expense of a player who is a regular member of the roster.

- Appropriate language and behavior is displayed by all members of a team throughout the course of a practice or game.
- Players are spoken to in a proactive manner regarding any concerns that may arise

Players' Responsibilities

A successful soccer team is built around the individual efforts of its players and the shared interest in seeing the team succeed as a whole. In an effort to achieve this, note the following guidelines.

- Prepare ahead of time for each practice by having your gear (water bottles, uniform, or practice clothes, shin guards, cleats, goalie gloves ready to go. And prepare mentally to give your best.
- Plan on arriving a bit early and communicate directly with coaches if you can not attend, may be late, or have to leave early.
- Listen attentively to instruction, particularly when it comes to making drills work ("good teams make the drills work!), and when coaches are describing tactics and positional play.
- Try your hardest - always. Running down each ball, getting back on defense, working hard on footwork, and so on, are the little things that build strong players and teams.
- Work hard on your own time. The top players on any team are those that go home and practice ball handling, footwork passing and shooting. It does not have to be at a soccer field, and anything can be used in place of cones. But practice on your own.
- Encourage, rather than discourage your teammates. Each team will have an assortment of playing styles and levels of experience. Be positive, and encourage your teammates to try things. What you do and say is how you will be remembered.
- Model good sportsmanship toward all including teammates, opponents and referees. Be that player who others respect.

How Parents Can Help the Soccer Experience

For Shepaug Futbol Club, loving the game of soccer and practicing good sportsmanship are high among our values. Parents of soccer players can play a lead role in helping us to achieve these goals. With this in mind, we would like for parents (as well as coaches and players) to take the lead in practicing the following:

1. **Keep the fun in soccer.** Encourage our kids to put forth their best effort and improve without focusing on outcomes. Scoring goals and winning games are great, but there is much more to be gained from participating on a team. Remember, the goal of youth soccer is to enjoy the game and develop new skills. Of course competition is important too, especially as players progress. But loving the game and moderating the level of pressure are key at all levels.
2. **Encourage your child to practice good sportsmanship and be a team player.** On any given team there are a handful of players whom others respect for their modeling of good sportsmanship and promotion of team spirit. Encourage your child to be one of those who:
 - Lead by example, and consistently work hard in both practice and games

- Encourage rather than criticize their teammates, especially after a mistake
 - Make the extra pass when possible
 - Are respectful toward opponents and referees
 - Appreciate good competition
3. **Model good sportsmanship toward officials from the sidelines.** Show respect toward officials, and remember that many are teenagers from our program, who we have encouraged to take up officiating in an effort to develop life skills and earn money. Even adult referees make a modest sum of money when one considers their travel and that they often structure entire days or even weekends around a couple of games.
 4. **Refrain from sideline Coaching.** Please allow the coaches to handle the tactical side of the game. Yelling instructions can distract players and send mixed signals. Remember that this is recreational rather than scholastic soccer. In addition to trying to be competitive, coaches are mindful of providing adequate playing time for all players and a host of individual issues that may be going on for their players.
 5. **Communicate with coaches in a constructive manner.** Parent concerns usually revolve around playing time, positions, the nature of practices or game tactics. If you have such a concern or an idea, try to communicate it in a respectful and constructive manner.
 6. **Be punctual and reliable.** Try your best to be on time for games and practices. Of course being a parent often means being in more than one place at once, and there are times when we all run late. That is understandable. On the other hand, if you know that you are going to be running late, please arrange for an alternate ride for your child, as most coaches would be quite reluctant to leave practice until every child has been picked up. Yet, they may have post-practice or post-game plans. Last, please make sure that your child is properly equipped with the necessary gear including 2 water bottles, uniform, shin guards, ball and cleats.

By following these guidelines, parents can help promote a positive and supportive environment for their children to develop skills, become good athletes and formulate a healthy approach to competition.

Further Reading:

Isport360 "How Coaches Think: Being a Good Teammate"

<https://isport360.com/how-coaches-think-being-a-good-teammate/>