



NEWTON YOUTH SOCCER

GAME DAY: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, COACHES AND SPECTATORS

Newton Youth Soccer operates solely for the benefit of the children that it serves. Our goals are to have fun, provide a positive and healthy environment where the participants learn the game of soccer, improve their skills, and help them realize their full potential as players.

Athletics and competition go hand-in-hand. In our natural desire to see our children and players excel we often equate “excelling” with “winning.” Wins and losses are part of keeping score. They should not define our children’s soccer experiences. They can be tools that help players learn from their mistakes and their successes. They can also obscure individual achievements and reinforce negative attitudes that are contrary to our goals. How wins and losses affect our children depends on the attitudes and conduct of parents, coaches and other spectators.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Support the referee’s decisions. Refereeing soccer, like playing soccer, looks easier from the sidelines than it is on the field. FIFA’s Laws of the Game give referees a great deal of discretion. The Laws do not require the referee to call every breach. Reasonable people can disagree whether a breach occurred. Under the Laws only the referee’s opinion counts. If the referee doesn’t call it, it is not a foul.

REMEMBER: Quite often referees are young teenagers. Whether or not you agree with a referee’s calls, treat him or her as you would desire other adults to treat your child. Do not question the referee’s calls or address the referee during the game, unless it is necessary to notify the referee of an emergency condition such as lightening or serious injury.

- Encourage fair play. Cheer good plays by both teams. Don’t cheer bad plays by opposing players that benefit your team. Avoid “play-by-play” commentary.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AND SPECTATORS

- Don’t coach from the sidelines. It can be difficult not to yell “move up,” “shoot“, “pass”, “watch out” or other suggestions. Though well intentioned, resist the temptation. Shouted suggestions and advice confuse and distract the players and often conflict with the coach’s instructions. Part of learning the game is learning to think for yourself.
- If you disagree with or do not understand a referee’s call you should ask the coach to explain it. Parents should *not* question referees directly.
- Support the coach. The coach is not just another parent who happens to have responsibility for the equipment bag. Understand the differences between the Parents’ and Spectators’ Guidelines and the Coach’s Guidelines below. Don’t contract or countermand the coach’s instructions in front of the players. If you disagree with or don’t understand a coach’s decision discuss it one-on-one, quietly and rationally, at a quiet moment. If you continue to disagree, consider volunteering to coach next season.
- Find a comfortable place to watch the game. Stay there. Don’t pace the sideline. Under no circumstances may you position yourself near the goal or behind the end line.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES TO COACHES AND ASSISTANT COACHES

The international standard for coaching soccer is little (very little) to no coaching from the sidelines. American football, basketball and baseball coaches yell, pace and constantly project their presence on the field. NYS supports the project philosophy that “the game is the best teacher”.

- If you don't enjoy practices and games it will be hard for your players to enjoy them. Relax, have a good time. This is not your day job. You can prepare your team, prepare yourself and enjoy coaching without getting grim.
- Let your players play. Let your players think for themselves. Don't coach your players through every touch of the ball. Try to avoid shouting commands directions or criticisms at your field players, especially when they are near the ball. It is difficult for them to hear you and, if you do happen to possess a penetrating voice it is hard for them to absorb your message. Even the best advice is hard to take when bellowed. Instead of shouting, devise other strategies to communicate with your field players. Give focused instructions to one field player during a lull and let him relay it to the others. Send instructions in with a substitute. You will have better results if you coach, instruct or talk to your players after they come off the field or when play has stopped. For example, if a player is out of position then substitute at the next opportunity, explain how you want him to play and put him back in.
- Become familiar with FIFA's laws as they apply to small-sided games. If you disagree with or do not understand a referee's call then discuss it one-on-one, quietly and rationally, with the referee at half-time or after the game. Keep your perspective. Prevent parents from confronting referees and *never* do so yourself.
- The game is your classroom. Talk with your bench players about what is happening on the field. Keep them near you and point out things you want them to learn. If the bench players flirt around the sideline and play tag don't be surprised if they are unfocused when they go on the field. Divide the labor: an assistant coach can talk to players coming off the field and keep substitutes attentive on the sidelines while the head coach focuses on substitutions and overall play. When you substitute, explain to the off-coming players what they did well and what they should do differently. Be concrete. “Sandwich” any criticism: get lie players attention with a positive comment, make your constructive point (or points) and explain how the correction will benefit his or the team's play. Conclude with a positive thought. The sooner you reinforce a good play or correct a bad play the more likely will the player learn from the moment.
- ***Be an example of fair play and sportsmanship.*** You set the tone for your players, their parents and the rest of your sideline. If one of your players is out of control then rein him in, whether or not the referee has noticed. If a parent is coaching from the sideline or yelling at the referee then tell him to stop. Players' and parents' conduct is your responsibility. Review these guidelines at a pre-season team meeting and reinforce their importance as necessary during the season.

Have a great season!

Newton Youth Soccer

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