

Parental Support

The Key to Peak Performance

The role that parents play in the life of a soccer player has a tremendous impact on their experience. With this in mind, we have taken some time to write down some helpful reminders for all of us as we approach the upcoming season. If you should have any questions about these thoughts, please feel free to discuss it with us, the coaches.

1. **Let the coaches coach:** Leave the coaching to the coaches. This includes motivating, psyching your child for practice, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc. You have entrusted the care of your player to these coaches and they need to be free to do their job. If a **player has too many coaches, it is confusing** for her and her performance usually declines.
2. **Support the program:** Get involved. Volunteer. Anything to support the program.
3. **Be you child's best fan:** Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly. Your child should *never* have to perform to win your love.
4. **Support and root for all players on the team:** Foster teamwork. Your child's teammates *are not* the enemy. When they are playing better than your child, your child now has a wonderful opportunity to learn. If they are struggling, cheer them on to keep trying.
5. **Do not bribe or offer incentives:** Your job is *not* to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribes will distract your child from properly concentrating in practice and game situations.
6. **Encourage your child to talk with the coaches:** If your child is having difficulties in practice or games, or can't make a practice, etc., encourage *them* to speak directly to the coaches. This "responsibility taking" is a big part of becoming a big-time player. By handling the off-field tasks, your child is claiming ownership of all aspects of the game – preparation for as well as playing the game.
7. **Understand and display appropriate game behavior:** Remember, your child's self esteem and game performance is at stake. Be supportive, cheer, be appropriate. To perform to the best of her abilities, a player needs to focus on the parts of the game that they can control (her fitness, positioning, decision making, skill, aggressiveness, what the game is presenting them). If she starts focusing on what she can not control (the condition of the field, the referee, the weather, the opponent, even the outcome of the game at times), she will not play up to her ability. If she hears a lot of people telling her what to do, or yelling at the referee, it diverts her attention away from the task at hand.
8. **Monitor your child's stress level at home:** Keep an eye on the player to make sure that they are handling stress effectively from the various activities in her life.
9. **Monitor eating and sleeping habits:** Be sure your child is eating the proper foods and getting adequate rest.
10. **Help your child keep her priorities straight:** Help your child maintain a focus on schoolwork, relationships and the other things in life beside soccer. Also, if your child has made a commitment to soccer, help her fulfill her obligation to the team.

11. **Reality test:** If your child has come off the field when her team has lost, but she has played her best, help her to see this as a “win”. Remind her that she is to focus on “process” and not “results”. Her fun and satisfaction should be derived from “striving to win”. Conversely, she should be as satisfied from success that occurs despite inadequate preparation and performance.
12. **Keep soccer in its proper perspective:** Soccer should not be larger than life for you. If your child’s performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Remember your relationship will continue with your children *long after* their competitive soccer days are over. Keep *your* goals and needs separate from your child’s experience.
13. **Have fun:** That is what we will be trying to do! We will try to challenge your child to reach past their “*comfort level*” and improve themselves as a player, and thus, a person. We will attempt to do this in environments that are fun, yet challenging. We look forward to this process. We hope you do to!
14. **Keep up with the commitment:** As a parent you have decided to allow your child to play on a competitive travel soccer team. You need to show your child that you are committed to getting them to all games and practices. When possible, schedule vacations and other functions as to not conflict with your child’s training. It’s not fair to her or her or her team mates if she doesn’t improve at the same rate as the rest of the team.

PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY

Being a travel player now requires that you take on another level of responsibility for yourself as an athlete. It is no longer enough to sheepishly admit to your coach that you are not fully ready for training, and that you have not made any investment in your own development besides the formal training time set aside with your coach. What follows are some practical suggestions that you can adhere to in order to make the most out of your individual or team training times. It is most fun to be playing the game, so we need to do everything in our power to make sure we are ready.

READY TO PLAY

Players should bring with them to **every** training session the following:

- Inflated ball.
- Their own cool water (cool water is absorbed faster).
- Shin guards.
- Cleats and indoor shoes (be prepared for the weather).
- Emergency phone #'s.
- Keepers, bring your gloves, shirt and long pants in case the field is poor.

In short, you should be ready for anything! Put these items in your bag the night before your session so that you do not have to hunt them down and thus be late for training the next day! Be at practice 10 - 15 minutes early, in time to get your gear on so that you are ready to start on time.

PRACTICING ON YOUR OWN

The best thing that you can do is get your friends together, set up a field, choose sides and play. Sometimes, invite players that are older than you, and better. The most important thing is that you play, whether it is 1 v 1, 2 v 2, 4 v 4, or even 2 v 3, it doesn't matter, just play. If you can not get others to join you, spend as much time with the ball as you can. Find a wall to kick against, invent juggling games for yourself, try to chip a ball into a garbage can from various distances, be creative, have fun. Above all, realize that it is not up to your coach or your parents in order for you to get better. You have to claim responsibility for your own development. Once you realize how much fun it is to play the game with skill, you may never want to stop!