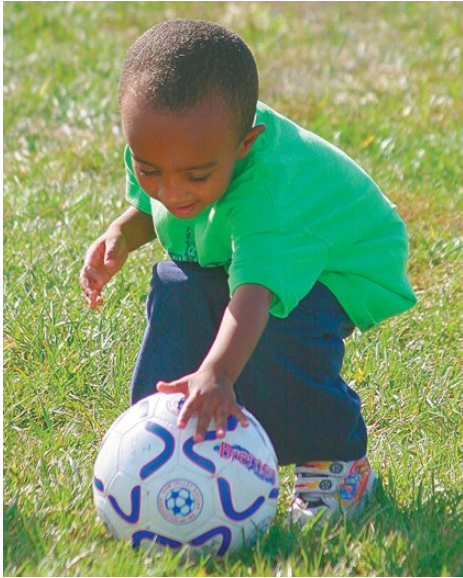


KVSA HOBBITS PROGRAM



This is a parent-child soccer program for children 4 and 5 years old who are not yet in kindergarten. Experienced KVSA coaches will guide parents and their Hobbits in one hour of skills training and 4v4 street soccer games. Parents play during the skills training (with help from KVSA staff). Sessions are held at YSI Sport Complex (Wakarusa and South Lawrence Trafficway, K-10) on Saturdays during each recreational league game day (7 weeks, time TBA). No practices are held during the week. Fees include a Soccer Hobbit T-shirt and soccer ball for new players in soccer year – 8/1/07-7/31/08. Players must bring soccer ball and wear shin guards and T-shirt to each session.

The KVSA Hobbits Program is geared to the developmental levels and capabilities of our youngest players. This program only includes U-5 players. The KVSA Board adopted this program in the Fall of 2004 to provide a fun-based soccer experience for children who are fascinated by soccer, but are too young to play the game in an organized setting. Now the Hobbits Program will allow these children to play soccer at their level.

Coaches who work with these young children should consider the following:

- Children must be treated as children, not as mini-adults.
- Children are essentially self-oriented and only relate naturally to a friend or two, not to groups of six or more.
- Children cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best with frequent rest periods.
- Children have a limited span of attention, so frequent activity changes are necessary.
- Children focus best when learning activities are fun.

The basic features of the Soccer Hobbits Program include:

- Few players on the field
- Simple rules
- Small fields
- Short periods of playing

What parents can expect from this program:

- A focus on the basic skills of the game
- More opportunities for your child to kick the ball. (One ball for 6; not 12).
- Players who will be more engaged with the game
- More goals (and more success experienced by everyone)
- Fewer stoppages of play for instruction
- More fun for the players

Hobbits: Soccer Coaching Pre-School Children

COACHING RATIONALE

It is important to understand at the outset that players coming to any sport prior to the age of 6 years old, in general, do not do so by their own choice. As a result, their coaches need to give them something about which to get excited. Further, at this age, learning to play soccer is secondary to most other things in their lives.

With the above assumptions, let's look at some things that we can do to energize the players, and, hopefully, get them to the point where they will enthusiastically initiate the sign up for next year.

- Each session should be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible. Basic movements such as running, skipping, hopping, etc. need to be emphasized. If these can be done while kicking, catching, rolling, or dribbling a ball... all the better.
- Training should not last for more than one hour. This is primarily due to physical fatigue and attention span considerations. Train once or twice a week.
- Have as many different kinds of activities ready as you can get into one hour. The emphasis must always be on FUN.
- Encourage your children to bring their own size 3 ball.

- Although your children may be very much the same age chronologically speaking, their physical and/or mental maturity may vary by as much as 36 months. You need to be aware of this and plan your activities accordingly.
- Team play and passing is an alien concept to these players because they know that if they pass the ball, they may never get it back. In fact, they often will steal it from their own team-mates. So don't be concerned if they won't pass, just let them dribble to their heart's content.
- Plan for at least four 90 second drink breaks, especially in warmer weather. Their "cooling system" is not as efficient as in older players.

And remember. Anyone... and I mean anyone... can look at a situation and tell you the problems of pre-school soccer. Try to be patient and create some fun for these very young soccer players, better called “chase-the-ball-no-matter-where-it-goes-until-I-need-a-break-and-then do-it-again-‘till-the-game-ends”.

Soccer by 4-5 year old players

WINNING ... it's why we are here... Wow, I hope we all have had childhood experiences that were fun and not necessarily based on winning. Everything in life is based on winning... Do we really want to emphasize the down side of competition – losing - to 4-5 year olds? They are not concerned (except for that Happy Meal) what the end of the game brings – so why should we? Remember that youth sports were started so that kids could have fun. So, bring a chair and your favorite beverage to the next “game” and save some room for a Happy Meal of your own afterwards! Work on the Fundamentals in Practice... While other sports work on fundamentals (and soccer's numbers keep getting larger) we have found that the most important things to teach at this age are motor skill development – the ability to control my body – and an appreciation for the fun aspects of the game – me and the ball - look at what we can do! We tend to forget that soccer is not a hand-eye coordination activity like all other sports in the U.S. In addition the kids are presented with an incredible challenge to make their bodies do what they want them to (kind of like Dad playing in the over forty league in any sport – he gets it going, you better get out of his way cuz' no one knows if he'll be able to stop). As a result, the objective becomes one of making my body and the ball work together as one.

Scoring Goals ... is an accident most of the time at this age. Let's be honest-that clump of grass has more to do with the direction that the ball travels than the one who kicks it (at this age shooting and passing are merely “kicking”). However, scoring goals should be the only thing on their mind at this age. Remember this...we can all focus on one thing at a time – focus the young on scoring goals – that's the object of the game!

Bunching Up Around the Ball. You see, that is what every player at this age likes about the game – they can run anywhere they like – no adult is going to tell them to walk – and they love the challenge of touching the ball all by themselves! We tend to forget that there is very little organization in the mind of a 4-6 year old and that sharing is not on the top of the list of their favorite things to do. Remember ... It's **my ball** !!!!! Soooooo.....let them chase the ball!! They will spread out as they learn to play with their teammates.

HOBBITS: A SOCCER COACHING SESSION

Warm-up

A very brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about football and to prepare them physically and mentally for the practice session. This should involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. They can chase a ball thrown by the coach and bring it back with different parts of their body. Or they can chase someone with their ball at their feet. When they've been running around for a few minutes you can do some static stretching but try doing it with the ball.

**Try this favorite: anatomy dribbling - a fun soccer warm up that helps improve basic ball control skills

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not a real 1 v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or "Red Light - Green Light", or a game where players are trying to knock their ball through gates. Keep players in motion at all *times*. *Avoid having them wait in lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games of elimination.*

PLAY THE GAME

Move on to the real game, but, make sure it is a 2 v 2, 3 v 3, or 4 v 4 so that everyone gets plenty of touches. You can have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch the game every 5 minutes or so. Be creative. Play with 4 goals or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep all the players involved.

Warm-down

Finish the session with a warm down. Some slow jogging with the ball and a couple of gentle stretches is fine.

Review

Check that the kids enjoyed themselves and ask them what they learnt.

It is important to finish on time!



Hobbits: Example Soccer Coaching Practice Plan.

Duration 45 - 60 minutes.

Equipment required: one ball for every child

Warm-up

Every player has a ball. Use the center circle or penalty area, or place cones in a 20 x 30 yard area.

Body Part Dribbling (3-5 min): Place the players in random formations within the space and have them dribble without touching other players. When you call out a body part (left foot, right foot, thigh, head, etc.) the players must stop the ball with that body part.

Ball Stretching (2-3 min): Have players stand with legs apart and roll their balls with their hands in a figure eight in and out of their legs. Then, have them place one foot in front of the other and roll the ball around the front foot ten times, then switch. Have them sit down, legs extended in front, and roll the ball towards and around their feet and return along the other side of the leg. Have them sit in a V and move the ball in an outline around their bodies, including their backs. This activity makes the players stretch without realizing it; players at this age tend to just “count” when being led through stretching exercises, they don’t realize what a stretch feels like. Activities like this warm up their muscles and keep them occupied.

I Can Do Something With the Ball, Can You? (3-5 min): Lead this game first, saying, “I can do something with the ball (dribble with your left foot, kick as far as you can, etc.) can you?” and then the players have to mimic you. Then call the players up one at a time to the center to lead the activity.

MOST IMPORTANT: NO HEADING EXERCISES

Water Break (3 mins)

Main Activities

Individual Ball Retrieving (5-7 min): Have the players hand you their balls one at a time. Toss each ball away, and the players must retrieve their balls as quickly as possible and bring them back any way they want (carry in one hand, both hands, hold on top of head, etc.) Let them come up with their own ideas. A variation is to call out a number while the players run away and they must touch the ball that many times on their way back to you.

The Glob (5-7 min): Select one player to be ‘the glob’ with you. Have the players line up on one side of the goal box and the glob stays at the other side. The players should start running to the other side and try to avoid being tagged by the glob. If tagged, the players should practice dribbling behind the goal until the glob has tagged everyone. Select a new ‘glob’ partner and start over. Variations are to have the players dribble past you.

Water Break (3 mins)

Off to the Zoo (3-5 min): This drill starts without a ball. Have the players gather randomly in an area, then call out an animal, and they must walk around mimicking that animal. After the players get the hang of it, add balls, and they must dribble while being an animal.

Attacking and Defending Gates (5-7 min): Create 6-8 'gates' or small goals with cones in an area of the field. Place one child in each gate—this is team A. Another child lines up facing the gate on either side with the ball (Team B) and tries to play the ball through the gate. If the Team B player wins, the players switch roles.

Water Break (5 min)

Game Time (10-12 min)

Play a small-sided game or two at a time, no more than 4 v. 4 with no goalkeepers. Have balls available out of bounds to kick in if the ball goes out (kick to players not as active in the game).

Cool-down (3-5 min)

Toes (2-3 min): Have the players sit on the ground legs extended and grab their feet with each hand. Through all of the following instructions, their hands cannot let go of their feet (this is another creative way to make the kids stretch a bit).

Can you make one leg longer than the other? Now the other leg?

How wide can you stretch your legs?

How small can you make yourself?

How large can you make yourself?

Can you get your feet higher than your head?

Can you get your feet behind your head?

Can you stand and walk without letting go of your toes?



HOBBITS: SOCCER GAMES AND DRILLS FOR UNDER 5S

by [Dennis Mueller](#); Reused with permission

I have had a request about what to do with kindergarten kids. Here are things I've done that seem to work.

Rule 1: be nice and have fun.

Rule 2: if things aren't working give it a minute then move on.

Rule 3: if more than one kid loses focus, change the activity!

DRIBBLING

Every player with a ball.

Rules

- Every player must keep moving and not run into anyone else
- When coach says "one" they must stop and put their right foot on the ball (never mind that most cannot yet tell right from left just tell the lefties to use their other right foot).

Ask what part of your foot you should use when dribbling, get lots of answers. Correct one is all parts (trick question). Show how to pull ball back with sole of foot. Ask them to try it after you say start. When they are dribbling around, say "ONE"; once they are all stopped, tell them that now when you say "TWO" they are to stop and sit on the ball. "START" , "TWO", Now show some other dribbling technique, for instance cutting the ball across with the inside of the foot. "START", "ONE", Tell them to move faster and to keep their heads up. "START", "TWO". If they did go faster, they probably had some collisions. Ask them how to avoid them. (Right answer is just like cars on motorway, go slower in traffic, only speed up when no one is around and always pay attention to what the other drivers are doing.)

Tell them when you say "THREE" to stop and put their nose on the ball. "START", "THREE", "START", encourage them to find space on the field, help them say "there's space over here", "now its over in the other corner". etc. Do several of the stops and starts to get them a little silly and maybe introduce another dribbling move.

Try "FOUR" - elbow, "FIVE" -left ear, etc.

SHARKS AND MINNOWS

Need a moderate space with boundaries (about the dimensions of one long kick for these guys). All but one player (the shark) has a ball. The shark tries to kick the minnows' balls out of the area. First let the minnows retrieve their ball and continue, then the minnows become sharks after they lose their ball. Continue play until all the balls are gone. Retrieve the balls and repeat.

Use a few cones to make a 10 to 15 yard square. Have all players with ball inside area. Tell them to try and kick each other's ball out, but to keep their ball in. If their ball is kicked out, they must sprint after it and bring it back inside as quickly as possible. Stop them, ask them to count how many times they can kick someone else's ball out. Start up again. Stop and ask who had more than 2,4,.... Now ask them to count how many times their ball is kicked out. Start and stop again, forget to ask for total.

Another game is to give 1/2 the players balls and tell the others to take a ball away and try to keep it. Players with a ball after 1 minute win. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

Arrange them in pairs. If you have an odd number, have one play with you. Play 1v1 keepaway for 1 minute. Player in possession after 1 minute is winner. Rearrange the pairs and go again for a total of 3 or 4 times.

PASSING

Have them find a partner, one ball per pair. This will take a little while so you might tell them to come back from the break with a partner and a ball before you dismiss them.

First have them pass the ball back and forth while standing about 3 yards apart. They will look hopeless.

Stop them and ask what part of foot to use for short accurate passes on the ground. (Answer is inside of foot, show them what you mean; that part of the foot between the heel and ball of foot.) Have them resume. Point out that a pass is no good if it can't be received by their team-mate. Ask what that means (answers on ground, within reach, not too hard, not too soft, when it is expected, for example it does no good to pass to a team-mate's back, or to one picking dandelions)

Stop them ask them how to receive the ball (answer: cushion the ball so it slows and is left in front of you so you can step forward to pass it, Don't let them stop the ball under their foot, or so close that the ball is stuck between their feet and must be moved before it can be kicked, tell them the ball should be kept moving) Now you will also have to tell them to back up after they pass the ball or else, they will end up too close together. Resume

Stop and tell them to do two-touch passing (you probably will have to ask what Two-touch is and find a correct respondent). Resume

Stop. Tell them that you want to count the number of passes in a minute and to start on your command. Start and time for one minute. Ask each pair how many passes, repeat.

Tell them to do one-touch passing. Time them for one minute while they count. Offer praise, "that's very good", That's better than I though a bunch of 6-year -olds would do", etc.

Now tell them to pass and move after they pass. Tell them to keep track of their partner, to avoid the other players (It's harder than it looks), and not to dribble (two- or three -touch).

If you have an even number break them up into equal groups. 2v2 or 3 v3 is good, but 4v4 is confusing and will need a good neutral player or two to work, if you have an odd number pair yourself, or an older sibling with the obviously weakest player.

If you do pairs, have them play keep-away for one minute.

Encourage the player without the ball to move to get open and the defenders to challenge for the ball and to deny passing lanes. Team with the ball after one minute wins. Go again. Go again. Keep reinforcing the idea of getting open on the attack (in a position where your team-mate with the ball can see you, where you are not too close, but close enough and where the other team can't intercept the pass).

If you do 3v3, consider using a neutral player to help the team with the ball. Again, reinforce the need to move to get open. Point out what happens if you hold the ball too long before passing (you get ganged-up on). Keep such observations very brief and generally make them in the form of a question (to which you will likely get lots of wrong answers, just say "no, that's not what I'm looking for" or "that's it!" when you get the right answer) If the neutral player is reasonably talented, have them ask the players to get open whenever there is no good target. The neutral player needs to move to be a good receiving position all the time. The better the neutral player, the more players that can be involved. Tell the players with the ball to make the longest pass they are capable of to a team-mate who is open. (Not the longest kick, but the longest pass to the team-mate farthest away from the other team's players; Same comments about passes as before, within reach, on ground, not too hard, not too soft).

SHOOTING

Players love to shoot and score. Almost anything that gets lots of shots in a short time is fine. With 6 or fewer, a simple line taking turns and retrieving the balls works fine. Have them stay out of the way of each others shots.

For more than 6, you need to keep the bystanders occupied in some way. Having them serve a ball to the shooter, then move to the shooting line and the shooters retrieve ball and move to serving line.

Easiest serves are those coming from behind and slightly to the side of the shooter, also ball must be on ground and in front of shooter. Shooter should be facing sideways so he can see both the ball coming and the goal at which she will

shoot. Next easiest are serves coming from the goal on the ground back to the shooter who is facing the goal; hardest serves are those coming across the field from either side.

If a larger goal is available, a parent as keeper (preferably a totally inept keeper) is lots of fun.

The youngest will be lousy servers and you will have to decide if it is "working" when you have them serve. If not simply change the activity.

One version of the setup: Line in front of goal about 15 yards out. First player in line has no ball. Second player in line pushes the ball from behind to in front of the first player so that the ball is rolling towards the goal. The first player catches up to the ball and takes a first time shot. First player retrieves ball and goes to end of line, second player moves to front of line ... (You will have to instruct them about passing the ball slowly enough that the first player can reach it, but hard enough that it does get in front of him. One way to begin this is to have the first player facing the goal with his legs spread and the second player passes between the first players legs. That at least puts the ball between the player and the goal and as long as the pass is not too hard, the first player should be able to get a shot off.)

MOST IMPORTANT: NO HEADING EXERCISES

Other:

1v1: Have the players find someone of comparable ability. Use two pairs. Have one pair serve as "goals" standing with their legs spread apart and the other two compete to score. Tell them the goals must be scored by shooting on the ground. After one minute goals and players switch.

If you have an odd number of pairs, use parents as "goals" .

SMALL SIDED GAME

Encourage the team with the ball (attackers) to spread out and to move to get open. Encourage the defenders (team without ball) to get between the ball and the goal (goal-side) (or between an attacker who is "up front" and the goal).

Don't worry about the finer points of throw-ins, offsides, etc. Do prohibit sliding tackles, encourage the attackers to shoot, defenders to get back as soon as they lose the ball.

Defenders are everyone on the team that doesn't have the ball. Attackers are everyone on the team that does have the ball. When no one has the ball, deciding whether you should act like a defender or an attacker is hard to determine, but the team that gets it right most often usually wins the game.

The scrimmage will likely look like a swarm around the ball. If the coach must engage in some tactical instruction, have one player play behind the swarm to collect any balls coming to him and play the ball forward to space in front of and to the side of the swarm. Later introduce players to the sides of the swarm to collect any balls to the side or passes from behind and then dribble forward and shoot or pass to the middle. Finally, add a player in front of the swarm to serve as a target. Now with 4 players outside the swarm, the remaining few players are just midfielders, the others are just in good supporting positions. Encourage the swarm to pass to any team-mate outside the swarm, yes a pass back is good and should be tolerated, even if it is a bit risky for K-3 s. The players outside the swarm should be rotated frequently.

It will take K's all fall to get to the point where more than a couple will play outside the swarm. (except, for those who are really not playing at all and just standing with no clue as to what is going on, encourage those to get into the swarm. and get involved)

Do not relegate the only kid with a booming kick to stay back all the time. The point here is to learn and not to restrict the chances to learn in an effort to win or avoid an embarrassing loss.

Of course, there are lots of variations on all of these and you probably have your own favorite. With these guys silly games are not a bad idea. Just remember these little ones have trouble staying focused on one activity for too long, so make lots of changes. If something isn't working, change after a very short time, especially if you don't have a clear way to make it easier or more fun to do.

HOBBITS: COACHING SUGGESTIONS

STRETCHING

Ankles and Knees: hands on knees; knees bent; rotate knees in a circle in one direction 5 times; repeat in the opposite direction.

Hips: stand straight; hands on hips; rotate hips in exaggerated fashion in a circle in one direction 5 times; repeat in the opposite direction.

Torso: stand straight; lock hands in front of body; bring hands forward so they touch the chest; use arms to twist body in one direction; repeat in the opposite direction.

Lunge: stand straight up and extend (lunge) the right foot as far as possible. The toes of both feet need to be pointed forward. Bend the right knee slightly while keeping the trunk upright. The left heel must stay on the ground. Repeat with left foot extended.

Toe Touch: Stand straight up with feet shoulder width apart. Bend forward and touch toes.

Stand straight up with feet double shoulder width apart. Bend forward and touch the ground between the legs.

Stand straight up with feet double shoulder width apart and the toes of both feet pointed forward. Bend to the right and try to touch the right foot with both hands. Straighten up. Repeat for left side.

Groin Stretch: Stand straight up with feet double shoulder width apart and the toes of both feet pointed forward. Keeping the right leg straight, bend the left knee and try to sit on the left heel. Repeat for left side.

Remember....

Warm up with some gentle jogging (with or without the ball) before doing any stretches.

Keep the stretches brief - about 3 to 8 seconds each.

Stretch to the point of feeling a stretch, never to the point of pain.

Make it steady. Never bounce when you stretch.

Be gradual. Increase the stretch with each repetition.

Use proper form at all times to get the maximum benefits from the stretch.

Teach the names of the muscles to your child.

Remember the cool down. Stretches should be done after playing as well as before. Stretching is most efficient when the muscles are warm after playing.



Training Game for U-6 Players

1 2 3 Red Light

Skill: Dribbling

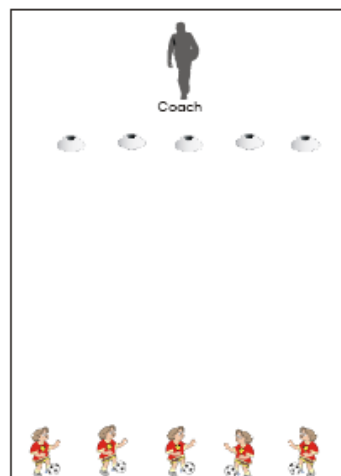
Number Of Players Required: Full U-6 team

Equipment: 4 cones to mark grid and 1 cone and 1 ball for each player

Grid Requirement: 20 X 20 yard grid

Organization: Create a 20 X 30 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

How The Game Is Played: The coach stands on one endline with his back to the players who are spread along the opposite endline. Place 5 cones behind the coach, when the coach has back to the players, the players must dribble toward the opposite endline. Before the coach turns around he yells "1 2 3 Red Light" and then turns around. At that point all players must have stopped the ball with the sole of their feet. Any one seen moving is sent back to the endline. The coach turns his back again. Repeat. The first player to pick up a cone wins.



Variations: Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of R or L, or use inside of both feet. Use the endline in place of cones (first player to the endline wins).

HOBBITS: ANATOMY DRIBBLING

A fun soccer warm up that helps improve basic ball control skills.

Focus: Dribbling, quick reaction

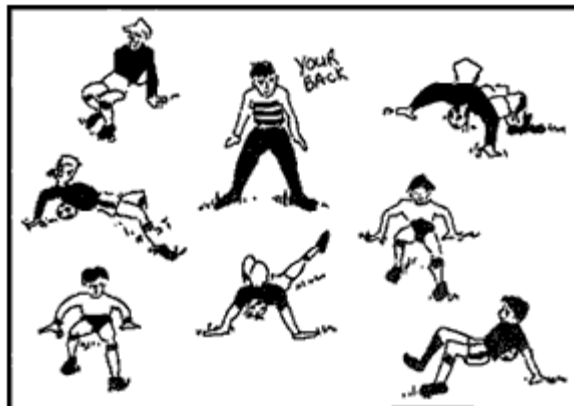
Area: 10 yard square

Players: Any number

Equipment: One ball for each player

Formation: Players dribble freely inside the square.

Procedure: While players dribble, coach calls out a body part such as "left foot". Players put that part of the body on the ball as quickly as possible. Let anticipation build between calls. Body parts can include hand, elbow, shoulder, nose, ear, knees, buns, etc.



Variations:

Use two or more parts, such as "nose, right elbow and left knee".

Most of the above information has been obtained the SOCCER-COACH-L Coaching Manual Collective. Please, note their copyright.

Note on copyright: The article you have just read is a creation of the SOCCER-COACH-L Coaching Manual Collective, which is a pseudonym for a joint project among several individuals intended to provide basic information for the benefit of soccer (Association Football) coaches, especially those who are new to the game. The copyright in this jointly created work is jointly held by the individuals named in the [list of contributors](#) contained in the manual, who created and wrote this work.

For more information: visit www.footy4kids.co.uk



11. PARENT SOCCER RULES

Your child is playing soccer for fun. Please, realize that everyone wants you to enjoy the game also. This information is being provided as an effort to assist you, as a parent, and your child in gaining the maximum benefit possible from soccer games. Below are some simple rules you should observe. Please, consider them carefully.

1. Do not shout ***instructions*** to your child. This will cause confusion and may result in erroneous play on your child's part. The coach has ***instructed*** your child on how to play. If you shout ***instructions***, your child will probably try to please you and the coach at the same time. In trying to do two things at the same time, the child may fail at both.
2. Cheer for him or her when your child successfully plays the ball. However, remember your child is a member of a team. Let the other players know you support them too.
3. Suffer in silence (or moan softly) whenever something occurs that goes against your child's team. A display of anger may inflame a delicate situation in embarrassment for you and your child. Some parents embarrass their own children by making a spectacle of themselves.
4. Do not run up or down the side lines. Find a comfortable place to sit down or stand and enjoy the match.
5. Do not shout insults at the referee. The referee has the power to stop the game if the crowd becomes discourteous.
6. Aid the team parents by helping provide refreshments at half-time and after the game is over. Please, help put litter in its place.
7. If your team loses, adopt a positive attitude. Complement the child upon his or her good plays. Ignore the mistakes. The child will be happy you noticed his or her good qualities.
8. Remember-your child will forget today's game. Next week he or she will probably have forgotten the score. However, both of you will remember that you had a good time playing the most popular sport in the world.

The KVSA Board. 8/06

12. THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME

KVSA promotes many aspects of youth soccer in Lawrence. Although most efforts and time are spent to master the skills and tactics of soccer, and rightfully so, little or no attention is given to learn the spirit of the game and how it differs from basketball, football and baseball. The following article written by Scott K. Meyer, Head Referee, Chantilly (VA) Youth Association, and published in the Referee Newsletter discusses this unique aspect of soccer.

I admit it, I'm hooked. After years of playing the All-American three of baseball, basketball and football, I've learned a new (to me) and very different sport. First as a father of players, then as a husband of a coach, and finally as a referee, I've learned to appreciate the differences between soccer and the "traditional" American sports. In getting to know and value these differences, I've fallen in love with the sport.

Some of the differences are obvious. In basketball you can "pick" a player but the same act is called "obstruction" or "impediment" and is a foul in soccer.

Other differences are less obvious at first, but just as significant. The roles of the coach and referee are very different. In American baseball, basketball and football, it is almost expected that the coach will make a spectacle of himself (or herself) at some time during the game by berating players or officials, pacing the sidelines chewing on towels or carrying on in some other dramatic fashion. Baseball, basketball and football coaches are very much part of the game. Soccer coaches aren't. Soccer coaches "coach" by observing and talking to the players at half time.

Referees are also less obvious and less obtrusive than their counterparts in baseball, basketball or football. In short, a good referee maintains control of the game while doing the absolute least to interfere with the flow of the game. Soccer belongs to the players, not to the referees and not to the coaches.

The most subtle, and yet the most significant, difference between soccer and the other sports I've have played is soccer's emphasis on the spirit of the game. To me, this is the difference that makes soccer unique. This is the difference that I have come to respect and learned to love.

The international governing board of soccer, FIFA, discussed the spirit of the game in 1957:

The laws of the game and rulings of the International Board and FIFA cannot of themselves bring about the exemplary code of behavior which is so often referred to as "the spirit of the game." If football (soccer) is to continue to be one of the great and most popular games in the world, then those take part in it must keep up its great tradition. Everyone wishes to win but true sportsmen can find small satisfaction in victory won by unfair means. The spirit of the law must be observed as well as the letter.

The International Board of FIFA appealed to players, coaches and referees in 1968:

The International Football Association board received many suggestions for improving the game and alterations to the laws, and such suggestions were carefully studied. It is the belief of the Board, however, that the spirit in which the game is played is of paramount importance and that changes in the laws to improve the game as a spectacle are of little value if "fair play" is not universally observed.

Spirit of the game is concerned with three important aspects of the game: safety, equality of play, and enjoyment. Soccer has only 17 laws, the first five of which define the size of the field and ball, the number of players, equipment, and the role of the referee. But behind each law is the spirit of the game or the spirit of the law. Soccer emphasizes the adherence to the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law.

In the American sports of football, baseball and basketball, there is an accepted, and often time coached, tradition of winning at all costs. Some coaches and players seem willing to do anything they can get away with to win.

In soccer, winning is important –the objective of the game is to score more goals than your opponent. But the tradition of soccer is that it must be won within the spirit of the game. As quoted above, "Everyone wishes to win, but true

sportsmen can find small satisfaction in victory won by unfair means. The spirit of the law must be observed as well as the letter of the law.”

But what is meant by the “spirit of the game”? Again, some contrasts with baseball, football and basketball might be helpful.

In basketball, if a player has a breakaway and is about to score an easy lay-up, it is quite acceptable for a player to deliberately foul the shooter to make him/her shoot free throws. Players do it, coaches do it. Why not? Better to make the player have to shoot two free throws than to get almost certain two points from the lay-up. In soccer, however, such action is considered to be outside the spirit of the game. If a player has a breakaway on the goal and a defensive player deliberately grabs his/her shirt, the act is a foul resulting in a direct free kick (or penalty kick if the foul occurred with the penalty area). But it is also “ungentlemanly conduct” which will result in ejection of the player from the game.

Likewise, a player who deliberately handles the ball to prevent a goal from being scored is not to be congratulated for doing everything possible to win. While one might argue that it is smart play (there is a chance the player will miss or the goalie will stop the penalty kick), such an act is clearly a violation of the spirit of the game. Again, the player will be sent off for ungentlemanly conduct.

In football, players routinely taunt one another. In basketball, players jump up and down in front of the player trying to throw the ball in order to distract the thrower or obstruct the throw. In baseball, players yell at the opposing batters. “Hey batter, batter, batter...” is a common chant heard from players. In basketball, players will flick a hand at a shooter in an attempt to make the shooter flinch. In football, coaches yell at players to fall down and fake an injury as a means of stopping the clock if all the time-outs have been used. In all three sports, players and coaches routinely protest call made by the officials.

All of the actions described above are acceptable in football, baseball and basketball. ALL are considered to be violations of the spirit of the game in soccer. The purpose of pointing out these differences is not to be critical of football, baseball, or basketball (although I do think the actions of some coaches and players are a terrible example of our youth). My purpose in pointing out these differences is to contrast these sports with soccer. In soccer, these actions, along with many others, are considered to be outside the spirit of the game and are not tolerated. If committed, they will lead to a foul and often a caution or ejection.

Soccer is a different sport – one that is new to many of us. Of the many ways it differs from our traditional sports, one of the most important, and to me the most wonderful, is its tradition of adherence to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law. As coaches, as referees, as parents, and as players, it is important that we understand, support and adhere to the spirit of the game, not just the letter of the law. If we don't, we are really not playing soccer. We would be changing the game just as surely as we would be changing it by permitting coaches to call time-out to diagram plays, or by putting seven officials with stripped shirts on the field.



13. Referees, Coaches and Parents: Role Models for Life

REFEREES: *What can they do to make the game of soccer better for the players?*

1. Know the Law and the rules.
2. Be professional; i.e. on time, in proper uniform, prepared, fit, etc.
3. Study the game and the spirit of soccer.
4. Attend meetings, clinics, and seminars.
5. Show respect to players, coaches, parents and spectators.
6. Explain rules, when needed.
7. Help less experienced referees.
8. Play the game to better understand it.
9. Seek evaluation from coaches/players.
10. Be assessed regularly.
11. Smile and enjoy the game.
12. Be firm, fair and honest.
13. Be consistent.
14. Accept only the number and level of assignments that can be done well.
15. Be neutral.
16. Know and use proper procedures.
17. Always remain calm.
18. Take each game seriously.
19. Implement good management techniques
20. Show courage and confidence; avoid arrogance.

COACHES: *What can they do to make the game of soccer more enjoyable for the players and easier for the referee to manage?*

1. Take a course on the Laws.
2. Be accepting of the referee's decisions.
3. Remain calm.
4. Do not make loud, offensive remarks.
5. Concentrate on coaching, rather than on the accuracy of referee's decisions.
6. Be a role model of fair play.
7. Be positive; avoid confrontation with any official
8. During games, leave the decisions to the players.
9. Attend coaching classes to learn the most effective ways to conduct practices.
10. Give good guidelines to parents.
11. Set high standards.
12. Be firm with parents at games.
13. Teach skills and fair tactics.
14. Discourage unfair gamesmanship.
15. Communicate with parents often in meetings and social gatherings.
16. Play the game and encourage parents to play and to referee.
17. Referee games.
18. Delegate responsibilities.



PARENTS: *What can parents do to make the game of soccer more enjoyable for their children and other people's kids, too?*

1. Be knowledgeable of the game.
2. Encourage fair play at home.
3. Be supportive; i.e. be sure the player attends practices; pick him/her up on time.
4. Attend games.
5. Be positive or quiet at games.
6. Be respectful; expect your own children to be respectful.
7. Focus on good nutrition.
8. Volunteer to help the coach.
9. Become a referee.
10. Play the game of soccer.
11. Be calm and have good manners.
12. Support the coach's and referee's decisions.
13. Encourage communication between coach and parent.
14. Ask your own children to describe his/her role, what new skills have been learned.
15. Watch practices; focus on new strategies
16. Find soccer videos, watch them with children.
17. Concentrate on praising other people's children during games.
18. Read newspaper articles about older soccer player's successes; provide models for your own children.

Soccer ... the game for kids!

What role should the referee, coach and parents play?

REFEREES, COACHES and PARENTS together have an enormous impact on the lives of thousands of youth soccer players in the United States. How can we best serve the interest of these players? This pamphlet was created in response to an overwhelming number of questions asked about how the "adults" can positively impact soccer players. While each parent must be accountable for his actions and teach his own son or daughter to do the same, referees, coaches and parents form a trio of role models from which many of our young men and women learn behaviors that they will carry into adulthood. Cooperation, respect and maturity among the adults in soccer will encourage those qualities in the players. Joint parent/referee/coach workshops offer perhaps the best opportunity for these role models to get together to learn more about developing skills to provide positive support for youth players.

