

CMSA

GUIDE FOR PARENTS

(Parents, Children and Mini-Soccer)

*This literature is aimed at parents who have children involved in U6, U8 and U10 mini-soccer in their community house-leagues or in CMSA programs. **It is strongly recommended that it be distributed to all such parents.***

This literature helps to educate parents by answering the following questions...

- Why do kids play soccer?
- What is the benefit of participating in soccer/sport?
- What is the role of the parent?

1) Why do children play soccer?

Children play soccer, or any sport for that matter, in order to primarily have **FUN** and enjoy themselves. They also play so that they...

- may be **active**,
- are able to **socialize** with a few of their own age,
- may **learn**.

They have FUN if they are **successful but also challenged**, and are **praised and encouraged** along the way.

2) What is the benefit of participating in soccer/sport?

Studies have shown that it is very beneficial for children to be involved in sports. Relative to their sedentary peers, these children tend to...

- Have greater self-esteem
- Be able to socialize better
- Have a more supportive circle of friends
- Be able to work individually and within a team framework
- Develop important lifeskills such as the setting of goals, working towards personal and team goals, and dealing both with adversity and success.

But ONLY if the sporting environment is a positive and encouraging one.

3) What is the role of the parent within the soccer environment?

This question may be better understood by considering the following questions...

- Who is the coach?
- What is competitive soccer?
- What is developmental soccer?

3a) Who is the Coach?

It is important to understand that there is ONLY ONE coach. That is the parent/coach who has volunteered to help organize the practices and games for your child.

Please do not instruct your child during practices or games, unless your coach requests you to do so. It is very confusing, frustrating and **eventually emotionally upsetting** for a young child to be told how to do something one way by the coach and another way by the parent. Imagine how you would react if you had two bosses telling you to do something in two different ways. It is the same and even more profound for young children.

It is also important to understand the difference between competitive soccer and developmental soccer. **Your child is involved in developmental soccer.**

3b) What is competitive soccer?

Competitive soccer is one where all efforts and strategy are based entirely on the winning of the game.

This is characterized by unequal time for players, stronger players monopolizing certain positions, and it is short-term (for the game) rather than long-term (skill development of the player). At younger age groups it sometimes manifests itself in a kick and run type of game since the kick clears the danger from the goal, and a fast run onto the ball (cleared by such a kick into the other team's half) may result in a shot on the opposing goal. This can be exciting as the ball quickly flows from one team's area to the other team's area, but it does not help with the development of the basic skills that are so important to start developing at this age. These basic skills are dribbling, shielding, turning, passing, shooting and basic goalkeeping.

3c) What is developmental soccer?

Developmental soccer is all about the development of good habits on the soccer field, and the opportunity to practice good skills.

An example of a good habit would be the receiving of a ball, controlling it, shielding it if necessary and then deciding to dribble, pass or shoot, as opposed to simply kicking the ball away at the first sign of pressure.

Players also need the opportunity to practice the skills that they have learnt during their team's practices. So if players have been learning how to dribble by keeping the ball close and with their head up, then they need to be encouraged to dribble during the game so that they can practice these two important components of dribbling.

Obviously, most players **will initially experience failure** in the form of the ball going to the opposition, and maybe even leading to a goal. It is only through repetition that the player ultimately starts to succeed. Without this repetition in the game, the player will never develop. The partial success at this point leads to wealth of success later on down the road.

Developmental soccer is characterized by approximately equal playing time for the players, and players being afforded opportunities to play different positions.

These good habits and opportunities will result in a much more accomplished player, who is at comfort with the soccer ball. Players need to be encouraged when they are attempting to execute good habits or are taking the opportunity to do what they did in practice. **This positive reinforcement is a major factor in determining the pace at which a player progresses.** Simply, players, who can play the game well, enjoy the game more.

So, at practices and games, please...

- Help out if the parent/coach volunteer requests you to do so,
- Praise/encourage attempts at developing good habits,
- Praise good skills from players of either team - (if you praise the skill of a player of another team, it is more likely that your child and others on his or her team will attempt to develop the same skill),
- Look for the positive in the game (remember the glass is also half-full as well as half-empty),
- Emphasize the positive with your child,
- Monitor, not the score, but the development of skills by your child and others on the team.

CMSA also strongly recommends that you spend time, outside of regular team practices, one-on-one with your child in helping to develop his or her soccer skills.

Let your child/soccer player have FUN, be CREATIVE, make MISTAKES (many times), and DEVELOP!