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Youth Soccer Society

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<i>Ten Guiding Principles for Youth Coaches and Parents</i>
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The following are principles adopted at the Union of European Football Association Youth Conference held in the Spring of 1995 in Norway. The working group drew up a list of 10 important guiding principles for coaches and parents. This was originally provided to us by UVIDCS (now Pacific Sport).

1. Children's soccer means playing and playing means fun. For young players, children's soccer is their first contact with an organized game. Do not forget that this has to involve fun and pleasure and not hard work. It has to be an integral game for their young lives. The first impression is a sign post to the children's future development. So let them play, let them have fun and pay less attention to the results. The best outcome you can get in children's soccer is to have happy, delighted children who play together with their friends and can learn something.
2. For children, being with their friends is most important. Children in the past used to meet their friends in parks or fields in the neighborhood. They spent their free time there and often played soccer. So adults must not lose sight of the fact that an important aspect of soccer is for children being together with friends. We must watch over that friendship as it helps promote the human spirit. Therefore, try to have their friends and schoolmates playing together as much as possible.
3. Everyone should be included as much as possible. Nobody can improve by sitting on the sidelines, and nobody can say which children will later qualify for adult soccer. Today's "child star" seldom becomes tomorrow's professional. So let them all play equally long and give them all the chance to play different positions.
4. Teach children to both win and lose. An old adage says, "only by knowing how to lose will you know how to win." So adults should always set the example. If adults show good sportsmanship in such situations, children can be trusted to do likewise.
5. More practice - less matches. As a rule you should seek to teach players rather than put them under pressure by playing competitively. Too many games can harm a child's physical and social development. Norway has a rule that U10 children should not play more than 20 games a year and U12's at most 25 games.
6. Children's soccer should be varied and versatile. A multi-sport upbringing will be helpful in teaching the fundamental capacities for soccer and providing a well balanced physical education. Attention must be given to forming the body as a whole with general training methods and providing basic standards of sports hygiene and sports nourishment.

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7. Let us try to offer children "pleasurable soccer." For all participants, children's soccer must be a positive experience giving young players, above all. The joy of the game.
8. The games are for children, not adults. Parents and relatives should show an interest in their youngsters' soccer life. They should go to their training and games, strengthen the young player's self-confidence and support the club in its work. Adults should never forget that it is the child who is playing and not them.
9. Show respect for the opponent and the referee. From the beginning, a child must be taught a healthy respect for opponents and referees in the spirit of fair play. Adults must always provide the good example.
10. Get children the correct equipment. There is no point in buying too expensive equipment (shoes, shin guards, etc.) for growing children, as they won't be able to use them after a few months. Cheaper models are often just as good. So, set up regular "equipment exchanges" where used equipment can be passed on to other children.

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 presented below are some helpful reminders for all of us as we approach the upcoming season.

- Let the coaches coach/Leave the coaching to the coaches. This includes motivating; psyching up your child for practice, after the game critiquing, setting goals, require additional training, etc. You have entrusted the care of your child to these coaches and they need to be free to do their job. If a player has too many coaches, it is confusing for them and their performance usually declines.
- Support the program: Get involved. Volunteer. Help out with fund raisers, car-pool, anything to support the program.
- Be your child's best fan: Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw your love when your child performs poorly. Your child should never have to perform to win your love.
- Support and root for all players on the team: Foster teamwork. Your child's team-mates are not the enemy. When they are playing better than your child, your child now has a wonderful opportunity to learn.
- Do not bribe or offer incentive: Your job is not to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribing will distract your child from properly concentrating in practice and game situations.
- Encourage your child to talk with the coach: If your child is having difficulties in practice or games, or can't make a practice etc., encourage them to talk directly to the coaches. It is responsibility taking is part of becoming a responsible individual. Handling the off-field tasks the child is claiming ownership of all aspects of the game preparation for, as well as playing the game.
- Understand and display appropriate game behavior. Remember your child's self-esteem and game performance is at stake. Be supportive, cheer, and be appropriate. To perform to the best of their ability, a player needs to focus on

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parts of the game that they can control (their fitness, positioning, decision making, skill, aggressiveness, and what the game is presenting them). If they start focusing on what they cannot control (the condition of the field, the referee, the weather, the opponent, even the outcome of the game), they will not play up to their ability. If they hear a lot of people telling them what to do, or yelling at the referee, it diverts their attention away from the task at hand.

- 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 their lives.
- Monitor eating and sleeping habits: Be sure that your child is eating the proper foods and getting adequate rest.
- Help your child keep their priorities straight: Help your child maintain a focus on schoolwork, relationships, and the other things in life besides soccer. Also, if your child has made a commitment to soccer, help them fulfill their obligation to the team.
- Reality Check: If your child has come off the field when their team has lost, but they have played their best, help them see this as a "win". Remind them that they are to focus on the "process" and not the "results". Their future satisfaction should be derived from "striving to win".
- Keep the 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 exist with your children long after their competitive soccer days are over. Keep your goals and needs separate from your child's experience.
- 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 a person. We will attempt to do this within environments that are fun, yet challenging. We look forward to this process. We hope that you do to.