

SOUTHFIELD YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE

Parents Guide

Fall 2008 Edition

What is the League's philosophy?

The Southfield Youth Soccer League basic purpose is to provide a safe, organized, high-quality environment for learning and playing the game of soccer. The League's purpose is guided by the following philosophy:

The Southfield Youth Soccer League will promote soccer instruction and competitive play as a means to encourage individual physical and mental development in a team environment. The importance of winning and personal achievement is recognized, but these are to be attained in association with and not at the expense of sportsmanship and reasonable participation for every player.

Our Code of Conduct is:

Respect your teammates – they'll play their best when encouraged, not criticized.

Respect the coaches – they volunteer their time and energy and in return expect full cooperation.

Respect the referees – they do their best to run the games fairly and should never be verbally harassed.

Respect your opponents – they play for the same reasons we do, and should be applauded, not taunted.

Respect the game – it yields the greatest benefit when taken seriously.

What should I do if I feel my child is placed on the wrong SYSL team?

Once your child has been placed on a team, the rosters are submitted to the SYSL registrar. SYSL regulations provide little flexibility in making roster changes during the season.

Parents and players should understand that:

- Team assignments are made with the best interests of players and teams in mind.
- Every effort will be made to see that teams are not exclusionary; however every player who play on a particular team are given priority to remain on that team the following season.
- A player's individual success and development results in large part from how the player interacts with the team to which he/she is assigned, not on which team.

As a parent, you can help your child not to feel discouraged if he/she isn't assigned to a specific team. Such situations often work out for the best, as it allows your child to develop new relationships, while maintaining the friends they already have.

We encourage you to discuss any concerns about team placement with the league registrar, prior to completing the online registration process.

How are coaches selected?

SYSL depends upon parents to volunteer as coaches. Unfortunately, volunteer coaches are often in short supply. Please don't be reluctant to volunteer, even if you're not athletic or know anything about

soccer. Many of our most successful coaches never played soccer and are learning the sport along with their children!

How do coaches become better coaches?

Each season, the Southfield Youth Soccer League runs a series of clinics for our coaches. The goal of the clinics is to teach fundamental ideas for running successful practices. The clinics are also designed to give our coaches more knowledge and confidence. The SYSL also provides information and funding for coaching seminars and licensing courses.. We strongly encourage coaches to avail themselves of these opportunities so they may learn their craft.

What are a coach's responsibilities?

- Coaches conduct practices to promote skill development and tactical game awareness, while instilling a sense of teamwork and camaraderie. At games the coach assigns players to positions, manages substitutions, and provides sideline instruction and encouragement.
- Coaches should meet with players and their parents once before the season begins to discuss commitment and procedures.
- Coaches should set an example of on-field decorum and good sportsmanship at all times.
- Coaches should not have to waste their time (or that of other players) disciplining unruly or uncooperative children. Coaches must speak to parents immediately in order to remedy the problem. If the situation persists, coaches have the right to reduce playing time or require a misbehaving child to sit out a game. In extreme cases, the matter may be brought to the SYSL board.
- Coaches must address parents that display inappropriate behavior (abusing referees, criticizing players, criticizing coaching decisions, shouting instructions at players). In extreme cases, a parent may be asked not to attend subsequent games (and practices) if, after the coach has spoken with the offending parent and the appropriate Director, the parent behavior is still problematic.
- Coaches are responsible for the children's safety. Coaches must have their risk management cards in their possession at all practices and games. A coach or an assigned adult must remain at the field after practices and games until their parents pick up all children.
- Coaches should know the rules of the game.
- Coaches should ensure that all children on the team are learning soccer, developing a sense of contributing to a team effort and having a positive experience.

What are a player's responsibilities?

- Players should take their commitment to a team seriously. Players who join a SYSL team are expected to attend practices and games.
- Players must notify their coaches when they expect to be absent from either practices or games. In the case of games, as soon as a player is aware of an *unavoidable* commitment, he/she should let the coach know.
- Players must attend practices on time and come properly equipped with a water bottle, a practice ball, shin-guards, and appropriate clothing and footwear. Players must wear

standard SYSL uniforms (shirt, shorts, and socks) to all SYSL games. It is a SYSL regulation that players will not be allowed to play without shin-guards and proper uniform.

- Players must exhibit positive behavior at both practices and games. Disruptive behavior may result in a coach employing such disciplinary measures as having the player sit out part or all of a game.
- Foul or abusive language directed toward *any* individual is never acceptable.
- Players should accept their field position assignments from their coach without argument and recognize that the needs of the team as a whole take precedence over individual desires.
- A player who fails to honor his/her commitment to his/her team may lose playing time, sit out an entire game, or in extreme cases be dropped from the team.

What are the parents' responsibilities?

- Parents should help their children honor their commitment to soccer and to their team by getting them to all practices and games on time, picking them up on time, making sure they are properly equipped before they show up at the field (soccer cleats, shin-guards, proper attire – including jacket/sweats during colder weather, and a water bottle for practices), encouraging proper eating and a good night's sleep before games, and fostering appropriate behavior on the field. In other words, parents should encourage their children to act like responsible athletes.
- Parents are encouraged to attend as many games as possible. Most children crave parental support and attention; your presence and enthusiastic cheers will help everyone's morale.
- Parents are responsible for registering your child prior to each season. Late registrations may result in your child's not being able to play if teams are full.
- Parents should assist team managers when asked to bring water or other refreshments and to help with transportation for away SYSL games. Parents must find substitutes if they are unable to help.
- Parents should set a positive role model for children. Parents should not be overly focused on results. Parents should be positive and upbeat in supporting the players and coaches. They should also not blame unfavorable outcomes on poor coaching, refereeing or play by specific members of a team. Negative parental behavior takes the fun out of soccer for the children.

Is it OK to yell to (not at) my child during a game?

Parents are encouraged to attend games and loudly support the team's efforts. Words of encouragement, such as "Good try," "Nice play," "Great tackle," and "Let's go team" are always welcome. Also, good plays on either side should be applauded.

If you are tempted to yell instructions, however, remember that the coaches have worked hard to train and organize the players as a team; therefore any coaching from spectators may prove disruptive and

confusing. You might yell, “Pass” when the coach wants your child to dribble, and you might yell, “Shoot” when the coach wants your child to pass. So, if you want to yell something you think is helpful, please follow the coaches lead!

Even soccer coaches are not supposed to yell instructions to the players, but anyone who has coached younger players knows this is not practical. When children are learning the game, the coach needs to constantly tell players where to be and what to do, although at some point the children need to learn how to think for themselves. For older players, quick thinking without help from the coach is a necessary mental skill needed to reach the next higher level.

What can I do if the referee is making bad calls? Is it OK to question or yell at a referee?

No! SYSL forbids shouting at game officials, because it sets a poor example for our youngsters. In fact, SYSL does not permit parents to address the referee at all. The policy applies to coaches as well. Coaches can only communicate necessary information to conduct the game (substitution, time left to play). Parents can help demonstrate good sportsmanship, particularly in game situations, by providing positive support, but never criticizing the referee, the coach, or another player.

There is a shortage of soccer officials, young and old. About 30% of novice referees quit after just a year on the field, many of them citing harsh treatment by coaches and fans. Don't let their official uniform fool you. Many referees are high school students; they will make mistakes and bad calls; they will not see some fouls. Let's be courteous to all referees, even if they make a mistake. It's not an easy job! Please treat our high school referees as if they were your children out there trying to do a good job.

Parents should also be aware that the coach is responsible for the behavior of spectators; inappropriate spectator behavior can result in the team being penalized.

Is it true that games are never canceled due to bad weather?

Soccer is an all-weather sport. Therefore you should expect that at least some of your child's games would be played on damp and rainy days.

The coach cannot cancel SYSL games if he/she feels the weather is too nasty. This decision rests with the SYSL field coordinator, division managers or the referee assigned to the game. The logistics of rescheduling games is so involved that SYSL or referee will be reluctant to cancel games.

However, games will be canceled for safety reasons (e.g., thunder and lightning, or an unplayable, water-logged, or frozen field).

How much time will my child play in every game?

Players in Kidde Kickers, U6 and U8 programs will play equal amounts of time each game, unless they are removed for behavioral issues or injury.

While SYSL coaches know that most players would like more playing time than they are given, they must do their best to allocate game minutes fairly among team members. For many reasons it is not always possible to give equal playing time to everyone. Here are some of the reasons why:

- Some players are only good at one position, but the team has a lot of other players who are also capable of playing the same position.
- A player who is good at goal keeping may have more playing time because there is no one else appropriate for this position. Coaches may also award goalkeepers by giving them extra time playing other field positions.
- A player who has not attended practice regularly, does not play with full effort, or who has been uncooperative, should expect to play less during games.
- A player who is not in good physical shape and tires easily, or who is complaining about an injury, will get less playing time.
- The coach needs to wait for a suitable time to substitute according to SYSL rules. This means that sometimes players cannot be substituted even if the coach wants to do so.

Why is Registration required so many months before the start of each season?

There is a tremendous amount of planning which takes place prior to each season. Once we know which children will be playing, we need to assign each player to a team and then see if any parents wish to coach. Often there is a lack of volunteer coaches, so team assignments must be juggled.

Team information must be submitted to league schedulers 1 to 2 months prior to the season because SYSL and the leagues we compete against need time to assign teams to Divisions and to print up schedules. In addition, the Soccer League has to order uniforms and equipment, as well as determine the need for and assignment of soccer fields.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

Your first contact should be the team manager or coach. If s/he does not know the answer, you should contact the appropriate Division Manager listed on the web page, call 248-788-7043 or email info@southfieldsoccer.org.