



# YOUTH SOCCER PLAYBOOK

## DEAR PARENTS / PLAYERS:

The purpose of this playbook is to give you a better idea of what to expect before and during the soccer season. We've addressed many common questions that parents ask, but if you have any additional questions please give us a call at 847.850.2119.

**YOUTH SOCCER PROGRAM** – The Buffalo Grove Park District Soccer Program is a recreational/instructional league designed to provide each player, regardless of ability, with a positive sports experience. We stress learning, safety, sportsmanship, and fun. Parents please support your young athlete with encouragement and good sportsmanship at all games and practices.

**PLAYER EQUIPMENT** – Soccer players need to supply their own:

- Soccer ball (for practice – K thru 5<sup>th</sup> grade use a size 4 soccer ball and 6<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> use a size 5).
- Shin guards (worn under the socks and are mandatory for all practices and games).
- Soccer cleats or gym shoes (mandatory for practice and games).
- Buffalo Grove Park District issued uniform (mandatory for games – Uniforms are an additional cost).
- Water bottle (for practices and games).
- Please see additional equipment information below.

Football, baseball and metal cleats are not allowed to be worn for safety reasons. If the player wears glasses, a fitted eyeglass strap is required. No jewelry should be worn with the exception of medical jewelry. Children with starter earrings may wear them but they must be taped on both sides of each earlobe prior to the start of the game. A mouth guard is recommended. In cold or wet weather, the player may wear suitable clothing under the uniform. No baseball caps are allowed.

**PRACTICE / PLAYING TIME** – Players are expected to attend all scheduled practices. Players that go to practice must play at least 50% of the game. Those that have unexcused absences may receive less playing time at the coach's discretion.

**INFORMING THE COACH** – Parents, it is very important that you contact your coach if your child is not able to attend a practice or game each week. The coach and the team are counting on their players/teammates to show up for practice and games and need to prepare accordingly if a player will be absent. The Park District coaches volunteer their time and it is considerate to keep them informed of any absences from practices and games during the season.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR COACH INFORMED IF YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABSENT.

**CONFLICTS** – If your son/daughter is planning on participating in other activities, you may experience practice and game conflicts throughout the season. It has proven to be very difficult for our coaches to make practice and game time decisions for players that are busy in other activities. It also puts unneeded pressure on the young athlete in regards to team loyalty and commitment. If you have further questions concerning this situation, please contact the Soccer Department at 847.850.2121.

**PRACTICES - GAMES - MAKEUPS** – Practice days are assigned based on the information you provided at registration, but the Park District cannot guarantee you will be placed on one of the practice nights you requested. Please contact the Park District by the assigned date on your receipt if you have any changes in your child's practice day request. We will make those changes on your registration form. After the deadline, if your child is placed on a practice night that you circled on the registration form you may not be able to change the night of your child's practice. Your coach will provide team game and practice schedules and other specific team information that you will need. Practices are scheduled to begin any time after the head coaches meeting. Games will be played on both Saturdays and Sundays throughout the season. The season is 8 games. There might be weekends where teams have more than one game to fit them all in. If there is bad weather, games may be canceled/rescheduled by Park District staff. Rescheduled game dates/times will be emailed to coaches and posted on the park district website.

**GAME DAYS / EVENING GAMES** – Games are scheduled at Willow Stream Park and Buffalo Grove High School (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade). Because of the number of players/teams in this program, games for all grade divisions will be scheduled on Saturday OR Sunday and possibly Saturday AND Sunday depending on the number of teams in each division and number of weeks in the season. Saturday games begin as early as 9 am and could go as late as 3 pm. Sunday games begin as early as 1 pm and go as late as 6 pm. Night games will also be scheduled during the week at Buffalo Grove High School for teams in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade division and at Willow Stream Park for grades K – 8. All teams will play an eight-game season.

**GAME FIELD LOCATIONS** – All games are played at Willow Stream Park or Buffalo Grove High School. Each field (at Willow Stream Park) is designated a color, which is painted on the upper back supports of each goal. Your game schedule will include what color field your child's games are played on. There is also a directional map in the information kiosk located near the main entrance of the park, at Shelter #1.

**GAME CONDITIONS** – Sometimes the weather doesn't cooperate and the Park District must determine the status of games. Games are rarely played in perfect weather. There will be some days that we must play in cold, windy, snowy and rainy conditions. Please call the **Rainout Hotline 847.235.6857 Ext: 5** if you are uncertain about the weather and field conditions. Games may be delayed, canceled for the day or canceled for the entire weekend. The rainout hotline is updated on game days only (when inclement weather is in the area). You can also register for email and text alerts by visiting [bgparks.org](http://bgparks.org) or by downloading the App **Rainoutline.com** (search Buffalo Grove Park District).

**TEAM SELECTION** – The Soccer Coordinator selects players for each team based on their previous experience, days available for practice, and (if rated) skill evaluation from previous season(s). Teams are redrafted each season. Coaches are not allowed to "draft" their own players. Each Head Coach is allowed to choose up to TWO assistant coaches per team. The Assistant Coach's child will automatically be placed on the Head Coach's team.

**UNIFORMS** – All players must wear a Buffalo Grove Park District issued uniform for games. Players are NOT allowed to play without wearing the correct uniform.

**PICTURE DAY** – Pictures will be taken by TOTAL IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHICS of Grayslake, IL at the Alcott Center. Pictures are always "optional" but we encourage each family to consider this colorful keepsake of the season. Total Image Photographics will mail the schedule for picture day to the coaches and the coaches will inform you of the exact time your team pictures will be taken.

**PARENTS RESPONSIBILITY** – We hope that all parents take an active interest in their child's soccer season. You are welcome to attend all practices and games. Cheer on your team. Please exhibit good sportsmanship and proper behavior at all times. Remember that this is their game, and win or lose; we hope that they have fun and learn more about soccer fundamentals and teamwork.

**BEHAVIOR POLICY** – Part of the Mission of the Buffalo Grove Park District is to provide safe and wholesome programs, parks and facilities for our residents and guests. The Behavior Policy has been established to help fulfill this mission. We ask all staff, volunteers, participants and spectators to help us in our effort to provide the best possible environment to enjoy our recreation activities. The Behavior Policy is available for viewing at the Alcott Center or on our website at [bgparks.org](http://bgparks.org). Questions about this policy and the disciplinary procedure should be directed to the Director of Recreation and Facilities, or to a Superintendent of Recreation at 847.850.2100.

**HEAD COACH & PARENT SOCCER TRAINING** – Your child's coach is required to successfully complete training to be certified by NYSCA (National Youth Sports Coaches Association) prior to the start of the season. These sessions help coaches understand rules, the philosophy of our program, and how to coach young athletes without unnecessary pressure. Coaches must also become certified in the NYSCA's anti-bullying program. Head volunteer coaches are also required to turn in criminal background checks. Finally, a Hands-On Coaches Clinic is scheduled prior to the start of each season at Willow Stream Park from 5:30 – 8 pm (dusk). All parents are welcome to attend the training to learn more about the game of soccer and to coach your child from home. This training is hands-on so please dress for physical activity and bring a soccer ball. Our coaches are volunteering their time and any support that parents can provide is greatly appreciated.

**FRED BORNSTEIN COACHES AWARD** – This award is given to a deserving soccer coach the first Tuesday in August at the Park District's National Night Out event. If you feel that your coach has shown exceptional ability in teaching the game of soccer and demonstrated fair play and sportsmanship to your child's team, we encourage you to nominate him/her for this award. The form is available on our website ([bgparks.org](http://bgparks.org)) or by contacting Megan Kile at 847.850.2119 or [mkile@bgparks.org](mailto:mkile@bgparks.org).

**CONCESSIONS** – There is a concession stand located at Shelter #1 in Willow Stream Park. A variety of snacks and soft drinks are available for purchase before, during or after your child's game. Concessions will not be available at Buffalo Grove High School games and players will only be allowed to bring water onto the field of play. Food and all other types of drinks are not allowed.

**LOST AND FOUND** – The field supervisors will keep all items found during the season at the Willow Stream Shelter #1 location. The Shelter is open only during regularly scheduled games on Saturdays and Sundays. Please make sure that your name is clearly labeled on all your personal items.

**PROGRAM REFUNDS** – If your child will not be able to participate in Soccer, you may request a refund by using the Refund Request form, available at the Park District office or website. Refunds may be requested until the Friday before the first weekend of games at 5pm. A \$5 administrative fee will be charged. Refund requests after the Friday before the first weekend of games will be subject to additional charges.

**QUESTIONS?** – If you have any additional questions, please call 847.850.2121.

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A SOCCER PARENT

## WHAT EVERY SOCCER MOM AND DAD SHOULD KNOW

by Nicholas Farrell

(Originally published in Metroparent Magazine, June issue.)

Today's soccer moms and dads are more than just mini-van-driving chauffeurs or first-aid-kit-toting amateur medics. Braving inclement weather and constant traveling, they are out each weekend, cheering young athletes on to a hopeful victory and offering advice and instruction. However, even when proud parents mean well, they might actually be doing more harm than good. This handy and practical guide of five "thou shalt's" and five "thou shalt not's" will assist you in honing in on behaviors that soccer coaches love to see from parents — while also identifying and removing the bad ones.

### 1. Thou shalt not shout commands at the player with the ball.

It's easy to think that the player with the ball is, for the moment, the most important player on the field. But for young players, this is the most stressful position to be in. "You've got defenders trying to get the ball away from you and teammates shouting for the ball to be passed to them," says Darryl Towers, a boys' and girls' coach from the Cedarburg Soccer Club. "In this situation, the last thing a child needs is parents shouting instructions from the sideline, which only adds to the stress." Instead, Towers recommends directing instruction to players not directly involved in the play. "Letting other players know where they need to be is acceptable, but the player on the ball must learn to think and make quick decisions for him or herself."

### 2. Thou shalt not use the phrases "kick it" or "boot the ball."

Of course it's thrilling to see your child boot the ball as far as he can downfield. But soccer isn't all about long kicks. Even at the earliest ages, soccer coaches emphasize possession as the name of the game. Towers understands that parents see long kicks as a way to move down the field quickly but insists that keeping the ball is more important. "Phrases such as 'kick it' or 'boot it' actually go against everything that we are trying to teach because they tend to encourage a kick that is wild and panicked instead of a simple pass to a teammate," Towers says. Instead, he reiterates that the preferred advice from parents should focus less on the player with the ball and more on instructing other players to make themselves available for passing.

### 3. Thou shalt not try to control the game from the sidelines.

On the sidelines, a parent's passion and energy can sometimes be misdirected into controlling coaching. It seems impossible to direct a child's every move, right? The same goes for soccer, says Mark Yeandle, a former All-American collegiate player and a youth soccer coach and camp director for Mequon Soccer Club. "Unlike a lot of other sports, soccer isn't a sport in which instruction from the sideline plays a crucial role in the flow of the game," says Yeandle. "It is ultimately controlled and coached on the field by the players themselves."

### 4. Thou shalt not coach thy child against the coach's orders.

Looking for a way to get under the coach's skin? "Giving instructions or orders that contradict those of the coach is a surefire way to get us to pull our hair out," says Yeandle. While parents may disagree with the coach's tactics, such as the position a child plays or the amount of playing time he receives, it's important to remember that the coaches are in their position for a reason. "When a parent doesn't agree with a coach, they should speak to them privately," declares Yeandle, "But instructing a child to disobey his coach will only teach selfishness and likely produce negative results on the field."

### 5. Thou shalt not disrespect referees or the opponent.

Don't be *that* parent who embarrasses her child by hollering at referees or insulting players from the other team. Yeandle notes that referees make mistakes just as players do and should not be abused because of it. "The referee and the opponent are simply a part of the game and should be respected as such," he says. Towers agrees and urges parents to put their best foot forward at all times. "Setting a good example for your child and other parents is probably the most important thing you can do."

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A SOCCER PARENT

## 1. Thou shalt encourage players to put what they learn into practice.

Soccer coaches teach their players new skills and tactics in practice. The ultimate goal is to see them used on the field, says Craig Charlton, a girls' coach at New Berlin Soccer Club and a former player for the Milwaukee Rampage. "One of the biggest things I ask of parents is to try and get the kids to take what they learn at practice and attempt to use it in games," says Charlton. "They might struggle with it at first, but it's the best way for them to develop and improve as players." In the long run, the small price of minor mistakes will be worth the progress.

## 2. Thou shalt ask thy child's coach what you can be doing with him at home to help sharpen his skills.

Just because parents may be too busy to be at every one of their child's practices doesn't mean that they can't play a role in their child's development, says Charlton. "Asking a coach how to help their child improve at home and then following through with it will have a massive amount of benefits for both the child and parent," he says. "Just a few minutes in the evenings or on weekends will go a long way toward improvement."

## 3. Thou shalt offer as much positive feedback as possible, even in the event of a bad performance.

Playing badly isn't an easy situation for most kids to cope with. In addition to dealing with her own emotions, your child may receive some verbal backlash from fellow teammates. Kevin Brennan, a Milwaukee Wave youth camp director and assistant coach at Viterbo University, has seen it happen many times. "When your child is put down by teammates, and possibly even coaches, what she needs is to be picked back up again at home." He adds that if parents offer praise consistently, no matter how well or poorly their child plays, the support will boost confidence and assure the child that they are always behind her efforts.

## 4. Thou shalt always demonstrate good sportsmanship.

In the heat of a close game, it's easy to lose your cool. Unfortunately, even a temporary display of poor sportsmanship will often give the entire team, including the coaches and parents, a bad image. Brennan agrees, noting the importance of doing the right thing as a spectator — even if you're the only one in the crowd not behaving badly. "Even if other parents around you are getting on the referee's back or showing other forms of bad sportsmanship, use it as an opportunity to show proper behavior," says Brennan. "Your example will be contagious."

## 5. Thou shalt volunteer to help if you have time.

No great coach, whether in the professional ranks or at the youth level, has ever done it all on his own. And while your child's coach undoubtedly won't need help deciding which formation to play or who the starters should be, there are other ways parents can lend a hand. Providing a light snack, such as oranges or granola bars, and water at halftime is a great way to show your support of the team. The players and coach will love this! Also, if you feel inclined, offer your help at practice, setting up cones or supervising simple drills. The bottom line is simple: If you have a little spare time, any coach will appreciate your offer to assist.