

Coaching at the Grass Roots

2002

Help for All Coaches Pre-Season



Congratulations! You have your team!

What to do next?




THE FIRST TEAM MEETING

As soon as you receive, or pick, your team, you must call a meeting of parents. This meeting is the most important one of the year. It is your chance to find out about your parents – and for your parents to find out about you!

Share your coaching philosophy. Explain how you plan to run things during practices and when games are being played.

Remember! Your job is to ensure that all players have equal playing time, have fun, and improve skills.

At the meeting, do the following:

- **Create a team list.** For each player, record: Name, address, phone number, email address, health information (including any medications the child is receiving), emergency contacts (including their relation to the player) and any other information the parent feels you should know about the child. Carry this information with you to all practices and games. **If you plan to have a team list printed for distribution to parents, be sure to get permission from the parents of each player to include their child's name/phone number etc. Print a list with only first names and last initials.**
- **Stress the importance of practices and, if possible, set the place, dates, and times of practices.** Parents will appreciate knowing, for example, that "Practice Nights are every Tuesday at 7 pm." Once everyone knows that you are going to have a practice at a particular time and place every week, it will become routine. This will help cut down on time spent making weekly phone calls and it gives the parents the opportunity to plan the family schedule around practices.
- **It is also important for parents to know the time that practices will end.** Never leave children alone at the field waiting to be picked up. The coach must remain until all children are safely collected. The coach is discouraged from transporting other people's children to and from practices and games.
- **Every player MUST have a ball,** so inform the parents of this. The ball does not have to be an expensive one. 
- **Every child MUST have a water bottle.**
- **Every child MUST have shin guards and must wear them while practicing.**
- **Find out what talents and interests the parents have so that they may help you.** For example: Is anyone computer literate? Has anyone played soccer? Is anyone qualified in first aid? Assign jobs – such as "snack parent" to bring cut-up oranges etc. to the field. 
- **Decide together on the best way to communicate throughout the season.** It may be by phone, email, or weekly newsletter (1 page should do it!). A parent may help by typing and distributing the newsletter during games. 

Coach – always print the names of the individual players on newsletters or notes. Give out the newsletters to the players or parents with that name. The ones you have left over will be the ones you know you must contact.

- ***Be enthusiastic!***
- ***Be organized!***
- ***Be prepared!***

GETTING STARTED

If you are a new coach, you should think about the following things. Even if you have coached for a season or more, you should do this as well.

- Check with your Club to see what coaching courses are offered either through the Club or the District Association.
- Ask if there is a Club Head Coach who is there to assist mini-soccer coaches.
- Find out what equipment you will be receiving from your Club. (Usually this will consist of uniforms and balls – and, often, not enough of them.)

What you will need:

- ***one soccer ball for each player***
- ***one simple first aid kit***
- ***cones – the small plastic markers are best.***
- ***colored bibs***
- ***a stopwatch***



Speak to the players' parents about obtaining soccer balls. At the same time, discuss the colored bib situation. You can use the team shirt, one common color of tee shirt, and a few tee shirts of another color. However, it is best to get bibs in three different colors at least.

If you intend to coach for a few years, start collecting the bibs for yourself. They are an invaluable aid. For example, they help the children make decisions much faster about whom to pass to.

Markers are also invaluable in helping you to define playing areas.

With your own supply of bibs and cones your job is made much easier. Nothing gives parents a better impression than arriving at the practice field to see the cones set out in different formations with the colored bibs in piles ready for use. Both the children and their parents will eagerly anticipate the practice.

As mentioned above, it is very important for you to arrive well before the practice starts in order to set up.

As the children arrive, give them a small task to do with a ball until practice starts.

At the exact time practice was called for begin the session even if you have only a few players. Delaying the beginning of practice only gives the message that you will wait for the latecomers. Then, next time, more will be late! ***Start on time!***



If you have any questions, comments or feedback about this document, or anything involving the Coaching Centre, please send an email to: ray_clark@soccercan.ca