



The following is a list of points of emphasis for a fantastic season of soccer in the Rochester Soccer Clubs Recreation League

I hope that you can adapt some or all of these guidelines in this form or another during the season.

If you want your kids to come out of their youth sports experience a winner (feeling good about themselves and having a healthy attitude towards sports), then they need your help! You are an important part of the coach-athlete-parent team. If you play your position well, your child will learn the sport faster, perform better, have fun and have a greater self-esteem as a result.

So to help your young athlete do well AND enjoy themselves while playing sports, here are several ways to be a winning parent:

### **1. Be supportive, but don't coach.**

Think of your role on the parent-coach-athlete team as a supporting player. You are your child's biggest and best fan, unconditionally! Provide encouragement, support and empathy but leave the coaching and instruction to the coach. Coaching interferes with your role as supporter and fan. The last thing your child wants to hear from you after a disappointing performance or loss is what they did technically or strategically wrong. Keep your role as a parent separate from that as a coach.

Let the coaches make adjustments as they see the need. Many times the instruction from a spectator is exactly the opposite of the instruction given by the coach. Allow the players the freedom to make their own decisions and to learn from their mistakes. Spectator statements like "Stay Wide," "Clear It," "Pass The Ball," "Get Rid of It," "Move Up," "Move Back," etc., tend to undermine the need for players to communicate with each other.

### **2. Don't define success and failure in terms of winning and losing.**

One of the main purposes of the youth sports experience is skill acquisition and mastery. If a child plays her very best and loses—don't become critical; show support. Similarly, when a child or team performs far below their potential but still wins, explain the difference. Help your child make this important distinction between success and failure and winning and losing.

Each player should enjoy playing because **they** love the game. Avoid offering bribes or "pumping up" your child. Allow them to become self-motivated. Make sure that you take time to enjoy the game yourself.

### **3. Help make the sport fun for your child.**

It's been proven that the more fun an athlete is having, the more they will learn and the better they will perform. Fun must be present for peak performance to happen at every level of sports from youth to world class competitor! When a child stops having fun and begins to dread practice or competition, it's time for you as a parent to become concerned. When the sport becomes too serious, athletes have a tendency to burn out, become susceptible to repetitive performance problems and even chronic injury. An easy rule of thumb: if your child is not enjoying what they are doing, investigate! What is going on that's preventing them from having fun? Is it the coaching? Is it the pressure? Is it you? Keep in mind that being in a highly competitive program does not mean that there is no room for fun. I have overheard comments from some players that they dread it when their parents start shouting at them or the referee. It is noticeable that when some parents get more and more agitated, their child gets more and more withdrawn during the game.

**Think about your own job. If you have someone who you knew was going to shout at you every time you made a mistake, wouldn't you stop putting yourself in the position to make the mistake?** That is what happens with some of the players on the field. They would rather not have the ball than risk having it and making a mistake!

#### **4. Treat the officials with respect**

All officials make mistakes. All humans make mistakes. Let the officials be human. Again all coaches have been advised of our clubs zero tolerance policy on referee abuse. Have you ever seen a referee change his mind because a parent shouted at him or her?

#### **5. Do not engage in game-related discussions with parents from the opposing team**

Your kids will be playing these teams for many years to come. We want to be known in the soccer community as an organization that has class whether we win, lose or draw. The game score will not be remembered. An argument or inappropriate remarks will be.

#### **6. Leave the game on the field**

When the game is over, no amount of comment, question or discussion with the players, officials or coaches can change the outcome. Regardless of the outcome, the coaches will evaluate the performance; reinforce the good things and work to correct the things needing improvement.

Good luck and enjoy the season ahead

Keith Wienke

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