

WASA

Information for the First Time Coach

January, 2022

Notice

This information should not be construed as a replacement for the rules of FIFA, USSF, or the various soccer organizations under which WASA operates. It is offered as a collection of rules, regulations, tips and other 'tribal knowledge' artifacts from those who have gone before us.

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GETTING STARTED

Your First Priority – Call Parents as Soon as Possible

You no doubt have just received your roster for the upcoming season. Even if you can't start practices right away, please call your players as soon as possible. Parents will hear about other children starting practice and will wonder if they have been forgotten. This usually starts a phone call or email frenzy to let WASA know they haven't heard from their coach yet.

Planning Your First Contact

Veteran coaches have a regular routine for contacting players and assembling the things they need for practices and games. As a new coach you are probably wondering where to begin. Here are some ideas that you may find helpful.

Plan when and where you want to hold practices, before you call parents

WASA does not assign practice fields, dates, or times to teams; the choice of where and when to practice is yours. There are a number of places like schools and city parks where you can practice.

List the information you want to tell parents in your first call or email

At a minimum:

- Your name, phone number and e-mail address
- When and where you will practice
- Bring a ball and water bottle to practice
- Players are required to wear shin guards to practice, and for games
- The color of your team jerseys
- The color of the socks and shorts you want players to have
(Coaches get to pick the color of shorts and socks. Keep in mind that parents may have more than one child to outfit. Players generally don't like white or light color shorts because they feel they are somewhat "see through". Black is always a good choice because it goes with every color jersey. Families with children who have played before often already have black shorts and socks.)
- When the season starts

PLAYER EQUIPMENT

All players must have safe equipment

1. Shirts are provided by the league. All other player equipment is provided by the parents.
2. Shin guards are required for all practices and games.
3. Cleats must be approved for soccer. Baseball and football cleats are **NOT** permitted. Athletic shoes like those for tennis, basketball, or cross-trainers are permitted.
4. Each player needs to bring an appropriate size ball to practice.

Size 3 U6, U7, U8

Size 4 U10, U12

Size 5 Middle School, High School, Adult leagues

5. Hair restraints should be soft fabric or elastic.
Hair restraints containing metal or hard plastic are not permitted.
6. **Jewelry is not permitted**... no rings, bracelets, watches, necklaces, earrings, or any type of piercing.

FIFA rules prohibit earrings of any kind. Contact with the ear could cause the back of the earring to puncture the skin behind the ear. A shirt or finger might catch the earring and pull it out. Covering earrings with tape or band-aids is NOT an acceptable alternative.

The choice to remove earrings (or not) belongs to the player. If a player chooses not to remove the earrings because the ears were recently pierced, **the player cannot play**.

Do not be surprised when referees refuse to let a player participate with earrings. Even if a parent gives permission for the player to play with “starter” earrings, the referees will not allow the player participate in play. The rules prohibit earrings; it is not the parent’s or the referee’s decision to make.

Referees have a responsibility to keep a player out of a game if the player is wearing jewelry or does not have proper equipment. There is no appeal for this. The authority of the referee is final.

Encourage players to plan ear piercing so that they will not be wearing earring plugs when season play begins. This might mean delaying the piercing until the season is over.

PRACTICES

If run efficiently, practices for the younger players should take 45 minutes to one hour. For older children, U10 or U12, practice may run as long as 90 minutes.

Quickly check the field for debris and other obstacles before practice. We suggest you have a quick warm up with some stretching, especially for older kids. Make practices a mix of skills and scrimmages; stress constant participation and avoid drills that have players stand in lines. Make sure that water is available and that your team takes water breaks. When you tell parents that practice will be over at a certain time, make sure that it is. Supervise the children so there is no fooling around. Check the Coaches page on the WASA website (<https://www.wasasoccer.org/coaches.html>) for sample practice plans with activities you may use.

Assemble items you may want for practice (These are not required, but may be very useful.)

- Practice plan – samples are on the WASA website.
- Guidebook for activities and drills – Your coordinator may have already provided one.
- Cones – There is no exact requirement for how many. Many coaches would suggest at least 12.
- Extra balls – Players often forget to bring one to practice. Two or three old balls from seasons gone by will work just fine. Make sure they are the right size for your age group.
- Pump and needle for inflating balls
- Whistle – This sometimes helps with conducting drills or when you need an attention getter.
- If possible, bring a small first aid kit and/or ice pack. These are not mandatory; they just make good sense. Hopefully you will never need them.

Printed Information to provide to parents

- If possible, try to provide a complete practice schedule. Do not wait until the end of each practice to announce the next practice. Attendance at practice is much better when parents know what to expect and have more time to plan.
- Team roster – You can hand this out whenever you like.

Involving the parents

Talk to parents during practices and at games. Let individual parents know what you are working on with their child. Give them ideas on how they can help. Players can become very frustrated if the coach is telling them to do one thing and a parent is telling them to do something else.

Encourage parents to help at practice. Give them easy things to do. They can help roll balls for kick drills, retrieve balls, or anything else you need. Invite them to participate if you need a few more “players” for a scrimmage. If they don’t want to participate, that’s okay.

Keep parents informed about postponed games, schedule changes, upcoming events, etc. Nothing erodes parent confidence and player attendance faster than a lack of communication.

During practices, enlist parents to help as club-linesmen should you need them when season play starts. There is more on this in the section on referees.

GAMES

You should have a game plan for every game. The plan should show the names and positions of the players on the field at the beginning of the game and the beginning of the second half. It should also show where substitutes will go when they enter the game. A position plan can help you make sure each player gets equal playing time. It is not a good idea to simply go to the game and “wing-it”. Your coordinator, or other coaches, may be able to provide you with forms that they use.

Assemble items you will need for games

(There is no rush, as long as you have them before the game season starts.)

- Game ball – Appropriately sized for your players
- Team jerseys – Your coordinator will provide these before your first game.
- Goalie shirt – For U8 and above. WASA does not provide goalie shirts. You might want to use team jerseys from prior seasons or T-shirts. Have more than one so that you can have a substitute goalie get ready on the sideline. Choose colors that contrast both your own team color and the colors of all of your opponents. Three different color jerseys will accommodate all opponent colors.

Printed Information to provide to parents

- Team schedule – Your coordinator will provide this the week before the first week of play.
- Snack schedule – Snacks are important to the players, even at U12. Many coaches ask one family per game to bring a light snack. It is convenient for parents if you have the snack assignments written on the game schedule. Snacks usually include a drink and a treat.

If a parent can't do their assigned game, encourage them to trade with someone. If a parent doesn't want to participate in bringing snacks, don't make an issue out of it. Find someone else, or bring snacks yourself.

IMPORTANT!

Allergies

Ask players/parents about food allergies. Let parents know about any snacks to avoid; for example, foods containing peanuts or peanut derivatives.

Trash

We have an obligation to keep the fields clean. Emphasize to parents that when they bring snacks, they should also bring a bag for trash. Emphasize to players that they should use it. Tops to plastic juice bottles and other trash on the field are hazardous to players.

Westerville is a beautiful community with nice recreation facilities. Let's keep it looking great.

SPORTSMANSHIP

WASA endeavors to teach soccer skills to young players and instill good sportsmanship. To accomplish this we need your help. Spectators and coaches who are calm, supportive and under control set an example that shows respect for the game, players, and officials. When someone criticizes a player, or verbally abuses a referee, the message to young players is that it is okay to disrespect other players and game officials.

You set the example. By displaying a positive attitude and by remaining calm and under control you encourage good sportsmanship from players, parents and other coaches.

1. Coach players on how to play better. Never criticize a bad play or threaten to take a player out of the game.
2. Do not try to influence the referees' calls or verbally abuse the referee. Stick to coaching.
3. If a spectator yells the names of fouls or criticizes the referee during the game, you can expect that the referee will ask you to go talk to the spectators and ask them to stop. The referee has the authority to stop the game until the harassment ends, or to terminate the game if it does not cease.
4. If a player complains that he or she was fouled but the referee didn't call it, explain that referees sometimes have their view obstructed or may have been looking somewhere else at the time. Encourage the player to play past the incident. **Never** suggest that your player retaliate. (If you feel that it is warranted, *diplomatically* speak to the referee at half-time or after the game.)
5. Make sure that you and your players shake hands with the other team after the game. Win, lose or draw, compliment them on a well-played game. Make sure all comments are positive.
6. At some time, you may have a legitimate concern about referee calls or the behavior of other coaches, spectators, or players. Avoid confrontations at the field. Gather as much information as you can and direct your concerns to your WASA coordinator.
7. Soccer is a game. At this level it is not the championship of the civilized world. Have fun with your team.

Running Up Scores

Sportsmanship also means being considerate of the other team. One of the most unsporting things a team can do is run up the score against another team. In a rec. level game there is no justification for winning by a score that could be described as “way too many” or “not even close”.

Running up the score is inexcusable. It deflates the players on the other team. The winning team doesn’t learn anything constructive and it makes the weaker team’s players not want to play soccer. With young players, there is no reason to do that.

When a team is ahead by a lopsided score (3 or more), the league expects the coach whose team is ahead to make changes to reduce the likelihood that the team will continue to score.

WASA expects coaches to use one, several, or all of the following ideas until play is more balanced.

- Move players to different positions. Put weaker players at forward and put the stronger players on defense.
- Tell players to shoot on goal with their opposite foot. If they are right footed, have them shoot on goal only with their left foot, and vice versa.
- Tell players that they can only shoot on goal from outside the penalty area (the big box).
- Tell players that in the opponent’s end of the field they must pass the ball three times before they can shoot to score.
- Keep mid-fielders at the mid-line and defenders in their own end of the field. Allow only the forwards to go into the opponents’ end.
- Suggest to the referee that the other team be allowed to have an extra player (or two) on the field.
- If it can be done and still meet the required playing time for each player, pull one of your players from the field and play short handed.

Sometimes, in spite of everything you try, the score can become more lopsided. If this happens, make sure you have tried all of the ideas above. If you have other ideas, try them too.

After the game, have a private conversation with the opposing coach. Express regrets for the score and ask if there is anything else you could have done. Good coaches may not be happy, but they will respect that you tried.

GAME NIGHT

Games will start promptly! Referees are instructed to start the game with as many players as are available at the scheduled start time. Tell your team to be at the field at least 15 minutes prior to game time. That means coaches must also be there 15 minutes prior to the game time.

Pre-game Player Equipment Inspection

Have the players looking smart, with their shirts tucked in and socks pulled up over their shin guards.

The referee will inspect:

- Cleats and shin guards
- Casts and braces for proper protection
- Hair restraints... No metal or hard plastic
- Jewelry... No rings, bracelets, watches, necklaces, or earrings... no piercings of any kind
- NO EXCEPTIONS!

Coin Toss

1. Five minutes before game-time the referee will call the captains to the center of the field.
2. The referee will ask the visiting team to call the coin toss.
3. The winner chooses which end of the field their team wants to defend.
This is the only choice. They cannot choose to kick-off or defer to the second half.
4. The team that loses the coin toss kicks off.

In U6 & U7, the teams kick-off in alternating quarters. In U8 and above, the kick-off to start the second half is taken by the team which did not take the initial kick-off.

Substitutions

Open Substitution is used in all age groups.

Substitutes must be ready and standing quietly at the mid-field line.

Substitutes must wait until the referee gives permission for them to enter the field.

Please keep players away from the mid-line unless you intend to send them in as substitutes.

1. Substitutions are permitted for either team anytime play has stopped for a ball that has left the field.
This includes:
 - Before a throw-in for either team
 - Before a corner kick for either team
 - Before a goal kick for either team
 - After a goal by either team
 - For an injured player *(If a sub is made for an injured player, the referee may also bring in other subs who are waiting.)*
2. Substitutions are **not** allowed before direct free kicks or indirect free kicks.

Disagreement with Referee Calls

There should never be a dispute or heated comments over a referee's decision. This is a rec league; the final score is not the objective. As a coach, never disagree with a referee during play. If you feel the need to ask the ref about a call, do it in a calm, rational way during a break... and away from the players. Most referees respond well to this approach.

The referee's main responsibility is to maintain control of the game, not slow it down with lots of whistles. A coach may think the ref missed a call; however, the referee may have decided that the foul was "trifling" and saw no reason to stop play. Referees are not accountable to coaches and are not required to explain their decision making process to coaches. If a coach constantly confronts and berates a referee, the referee has the authority to stop play and send the coach away from the field for poor behavior. If this happens, the referee is required to report the incident to the referee coordinator. The referee coordinator will then bring the incident to the attention of that team's division coordinator.

Missing Referees (no shows)

Usually, two referees will be assigned to your game. In the event that both referees fail to show up for your game, you may play the game with parents or other suitable substitutes, *if the coaches for both teams agree*. The idea is to get the games played. Everyone is there (except the referees) and the kids should play.

If the game is played (or not played) the coaches should let their WASA staff coordinator know that the referees did not show up.

If only one of the two referees shows, the game will be played. Each team should be prepared to provide a club linesman (parent, sibling, or friend) to help call the sidelines. Games in the U6 and U7 divisions do not need these club linesmen.

If you coach in U8 or above, before the season starts, you might recruit a few parents to help call the sidelines for games when there is only one referee. Explain that their primary responsibility will be to indicate when the ball goes out of play and which team should take the throw-in. Club linesmen are not permitted to make off-side calls.

FIELD CONDITIONS AND WEATHER DELAYS

When all games are cancelled, WASA posts a notice their website (www.wasasoccer.org). Unless you see a web posting or receive a phone call from a WASA staff member, **go to the field**. The game will be cancelled at the field by the referee if conditions are too bad to play. Coaches are NOT authorized to cancel games.

Guidelines for Judging a Field to Be Playable

1. 80 percent of the field, and both goal areas, should be free of standing water and heavy mud.
2. The turf should not be soggy.

The safety of the players is the foremost consideration. A coach cannot disregard a referee's decision to terminate or cancel the game. On the other hand, if the referee decides to continue play, and a coach feels that weather conditions are a threat to player safety, the coach should lodge a protest with the referee and pull his/her team from the field.

Thunder and Lightning

If anyone hears thunder or spots lightning, the referee should take immediate action by delaying the start of play, canceling the game before it starts, or by terminating the match if it is in progress.

Do not continue play!

- If the game is a WASA Rec. match for ages U12 or below, the match will be terminated. Advise everyone to immediately seek shelter.
- If the game is Middle School age or above, the referee will inform people that there will be at least a 30-minute delay and advise everyone to seek shelter. If after 30 minutes it is apparent that conditions are not improving, the match may be terminated.

Rain or Heavy Showers

Rain is NOT a reason to cancel play. The referee may delay the start of the game or call a rain delay during play.

- If the game is a WASA Rec. match for ages U12 or below, play may resume if the delay is 15 minutes or less. The referee may adjust play time so the game ends at its originally scheduled end time.
- If the game is Middle School age or above, play may resume at the discretion of the referee.

Guidelines for WASA U6 through U12 rec. games terminated due to weather:

If at least one half of the game has been played when the game is terminated, the game is considered to be complete. The final score is the score at the time the game was terminated.

If the first half of the game has not been completed at the time of termination, the game may be rescheduled. The rescheduled game will be a completely new game.

SOCCKER RULES

We highly recommend that you check the WASA website (www.wasasoccer.org/lotg.html) for the rules of soccer.

The Laws of the Game (LOTG) page contains:

- *A link to the complete FIFA Laws of the Game (LOTG)*
- *WASA Division Guidelines for all ages*
- *WASA modifications that are used in U5, U6 & U7 games*

The next page in this document contains a list of Fouls & Misconduct.

FOULS & MISCONDUCT

FOUL: To be a foul, an act must occur against an opponent who is on the field (inside the lines) while the ball is in play. Fouls result in either a direct free kick or indirect free kick.

Major Fouls - Direct Free Kick

1. Striking or attempting to strike an opponent (includes throwing the ball at a player)
2. Tripping or attempting to trip an opponent
3. Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent
4. Pushing an opponent
5. Holding an opponent
6. Charging an opponent
7. Jumping at an opponent
8. Deliberate handling (except the keeper in his or her own penalty area)
9. Illegal tackling (making contact with the opponent before touching the ball)
10. Spitting at an opponent

Minor Fouls - Indirect Free Kick (even in the penalty area)

1. Dangerous play
2. Impeding an opponent
3. Double possession (kick-off, free kick, corner kick, goal kick, throw-in, keeper releases ball then picks up again)
4. Off side
5. Delay by the goalkeeper (holds the ball more than 6 seconds)
6. Keeper picks up a ball deliberately kicked back to him/her by a team mate or received directly from a throw-in
7. Preventing the keeper from releasing the ball from his or her hands

MISCONDUCT: Misconduct can be committed by any player, either on or off the field, at any time before, during or after a game.

If the ball is in play and the misconduct occurs on the field, the restart is an indirect free kick to the opponent at the spot of the misconduct.

If the ball is in play and the misconduct occurs off the field, the restart is a dropped ball at the spot where the ball was when play was stopped.

If the ball is out of play, the restart is appropriate to how the ball went out of play.

Caution – Yellow Card

1. Unsporting Behavior
2. Dissent by word or action
3. Delays the restart of play (eg. obstructing the goal keeper from putting the ball in play)
4. Entering the field w/o permission
5. Exiting the field w/o permission
6. Distance on a free kick or corner kick
7. Persistent infringement of the Laws of the Game

Send Off – Red Card

1. Violent conduct
2. Serious foul play
3. Spit at an opponent or any other person
4. Handle the ball to deny an obvious goal scoring opportunity (excludes the goalkeeper)
5. Commit a direct free kick foul to deny an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent moving toward the goal
6. Offensive, insulting or abusive language
7. Second Caution (as in 2nd yellow card)