

Council Bluffs Youth Soccer Association Parent Course

Thank you for taking the time to read this course; we understand the value of your time. We've seen great improvements in our soccer environment in the past few years. We want to continue providing a positive place for our kids to play.

Youth Soccer provides healthy activity through recreational and small-sided games. These programs emphasize FUN, and de-emphasize winning. Every child is guaranteed playing time and the game is taught in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere.

Normally, the credits are at the end, but I wanted to put them up front so you could see where the information in this presentation came from. Most of the slides are from USYSA (United States Youth Soccer Association – it is the governing body of the Iowa Soccer Association which then governs CBYSA). As you can see, several groups worked on this. Coaches and coaching directors, the parent education task force, and Kentucky soccer. They have also listed some of the books they used in their research. I have a couple more that I'd recommend – “Just Let the Kids Play” and “Why Johnny Hates Sports.”

I have attended soccer conventions, one in Boston, one in Salt Lake City and one in Pittsburg and I also attend the Iowa Soccer Association Annual Meeting each year. Parent Education and sideline behavior has become a prominent issue wherever I go and whatever soccer website I explore.

As I go through the presentation, I will let you know where the information came from if it is not from the USYSA.



Resources & Credits

**US Youth Soccer
Coaching Committee**

**US Youth Soccer
Coaching Education Department**

**US Youth Soccer
Parent Education Task Force**

**Kentucky Youth Soccer
Parent Education Program**

"The Challenges Facing Parents and Coaches in Youth Sports: Assuring Children Fun and Equal Opportunity", Douglas E. Abrams, Villanova Sports and Entertainment Law Journal

"Through the Eyes of Parents, Children, and a Coach: A Fourteen-Year Participant-Observer Investigation of Youth Soccer", Steven Aicinena

"Games Girls Play", Caroline Silby, PhD.

"Sports Done Right"™ - The Maine Center for Sport and Coaching
www.msc.umaine.edu/sportsdoneright

"Developing Decision Makers", Dr. Lynn Kidman,
www.ipdtd.com

"Teaching Character through Sport: Developing a Positive Coaching Legacy" by Bruce Brown

"A Guide for Parents" - Florida Youth Soccer

"Parent Booklet" - The Australian Sports Commission

"The Cheers and Tears", Shane Murphy, PhD.



An Introduction to Youth Soccer

I just signed my child up for soccer!

Now what do I do?



Lots of parents ask the above question. Some are asking, "I just got talked into coaching, now what do I do?" This program will give you some guidelines.

The following slide is from Shane Murphy, PhD, Olympic sports psychologist and author of "The Cheers and Tears, A Healthy Alternative to the Dark Side of Youth Sports Today."



An Introduction to Youth Soccer

Is your child old enough for YOU to participate in Youth sports?

Shane Murphy, PhD, Olympic Sports Psychologist and author of "Cheers and Tears"

Watching our child play sports can be very emotional especially when we feel he/she is being cheated, hurt, attacked, or not getting to play as much as others. The instinct, especially when they are little, is to nurture and protect. It's much easier watching a High School game, because we know the players are old enough to handle difficult situations on their own.

Unfortunately, our instinct to protect sometimes gets the better of us. Sometimes we react by intervening, by trying to stop the threat, or by bringing someone's attention to the problem. In other words, we might yell out something to the referee from the sidelines, say something directly to another child, or even walk on to the field and stop the game temporarily.

So, Dr. Murphy asks us to pose the question to ourselves: "Is my child old enough for ME to participate in youth sports?" Can I suppress my emotions so my child can learn what youth sports has to offer?



Why Do Players Play?

1. To have fun
2. To be with their friends
3. To make new friends
4. To improve and learn
5. To feel good
6. To wear the stuff



"Make sure she knows that you are there because it is fun for you to watch her participate, not because you want to criticize."

Caroline Silby, PH.D, Author of *Games Girls Play: Understanding and Guiding Young Female Athletes*

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The number one reason children play sports is to have FUN.



Why Do Players Quit?

1. Criticism and yelling
2. No playing time
3. Over emphasis on winning
4. Poor communication
5. Fear of making mistakes
6. Boredom
7. Not learning



"Adult spectators, coaches and league administrators are guests at the children's games. We are guests because if no adult attended, our hosts, the children, could still have a game."

Douglas E. Abrams, University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law

Criticism and yelling might come from anyone: a parent, coach, brother or sister.

Some children would rather play on a losing team than sit on the bench for a winning team.



Four Emotional Needs of Players

Children have four basic emotional needs in organized sports

1. To play without unhealthy pressure to win imposed by parents and coaches
2. To be treated like children, not miniature professionals
3. Adult role models whose sportsmanlike behavior helps make participation fun
4. To play without unhealthy pressure to win imposed by parents and coaches

Douglas E. Abrams; Villanova Sports Journal, 2002



Notice that #1 is repeated in #4. USYSA must have felt it very important to stress.

Children learn the skills of self-control by watching their parents and other adults. Organized youth sports offers parents multiple opportunities to model good behavior and effective ways to deal with conflict. How do we handle “bad” calls by the referees, players that are “too physical,” coaches that don’t make decisions we’d like them to make? Our children watch our behavior and learn from us. Handling these situations appropriately helps make participation fun for our children.



Relax and Prepare for FUN!

Kids love soccer because it is FUN!

*"Real SOCCER...
2 Feet + 1 Ball - The rest is your... Imagination"*



What Can I Expect?

- Soccer is "the game for all kids"
- Children differ greatly due to age, gender and maturity



Parents love their children and want the best for them. Parents should focus on their child's potential rather than on an assumption of superiority. Parents should help their child to become what they can be, not fail at becoming something they are incapable of becoming.
Aicinema, 125

Children of all ages play soccer, from 4 years old to 65+.

But children differ greatly due to age, gender, and maturity. Part 2 of the program will discuss those differences.

The following slides are from Gareth Smith, the coaching director for a competitive soccer club in Iowa. Gareth also teaches some of the national licensing courses for our coaches. Gareth is from Scotland and has playing and coaching experience at all levels.



U6 Players

Five and six year olds have limited coordination and body awareness and are just learning to appreciate the difficulties associated with manipulating an object as troublesome as a round soccer ball without using their hands.

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U6 Players

- **The U6 player can:**
 - dribble in straight lines
 - turn the ball in wide arcs
 - kick with the laces but mostly with the toe
 - stop the ball if it is not traveling too fast, bouncing or coming out of the air
 - try and recover the ball when out of possession (even at times when it is their teammate who has it)

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We say that U6 soccer is 3v3; however, it is really 5v1: 5 players chasing the 1 with the ball.



U6 Players

- **Challenges for U6 players:**
 - concept of space
 - teamwork or complicated rules
 - short attention span

At the U6 age level, you will see the players playing as a “pack” or “swarm” around the ball. That is natural because they have little concept for space or teamwork. Soccer to them is all about running, playing, and kicking the ball. Teamwork doesn’t really come into play until U10. The only rules we have at U6 are “No pushing” and rules that pertain to out-of-touch. Everything is a direct kick, no throw-ins at this age group.

Children have a short attention span at this level. We recommend 35-40 minute practices with lots of activities and lots of water breaks.



U8 Players

Seven and eight year old children are still very egocentric in their thinking and due to their fragility are very easily bruised psychologically. At this point their coordination, balance and agility are rapidly developing and a growing technical range allows some players to be quite sophisticated in the individual play.'

At U8, children love for us to watch them accomplish things. “Look what I can do, Mommy,” “Daddy, watch this.” Many have not realized that other children might be “better” than they are – they are often very self-centered at this age-group. We need to be careful with criticism because it’s easy to hurt their feelings.



U8 Players

- **The U8 Player can:**
 - kick the ball over a short distance but with increased technical range
 - dribble away from pressure
 - start to encompass a variety of different kicking surfaces
 - begin to think in small groups, planned passing is more of a realistic tactical option
 - run into space to receive passes when given time to assess how to help their teammates

U8 players are starting to develop accuracy in passes and shots. They can use the inside and outside of their feet to dribble. You might see passing at this age group; however, don't be surprised if they only pass to their best friends.



U8 Players

- **Challenges for the U8 Player:**
 - still challenged with bouncing balls and balls out of the air
 - vision of the game is almost exclusively post-control (after possession is secured)
 - limited appreciation for space
 - do not understand complicated rules such as offside

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The vision of the game at U8 is mostly post-control. There will be a lot of possession changes at this age group because of this. When they get the ball, they have to take a second to decide what to do and by that time the ball may have been stolen by another player.

They will utilize more of the field than at U6, but generally will not spread out to use the whole field.

The only rule added at U8 is a throw-in.



U10 Players

Nine and ten year old players start to demonstrate much more creative play and also begin to identify themselves with a 'team'. Children at this age gradually begin to transition from being self-centered (egocentric) to being self critical and develop the need for group and/or team games.


The players in the U10 Age group start to get more creative, identify with the team, and start to become self-critical. They see that others are “better” in certain aspects of the game. Coaches can provide more group/team activities to give them competition with others.



U10 Players

- **The U10 player can:**
 - begin to understand the importance of technical repetition and have the capacity to maintain attention
 - attempt to head the ball and are more comfortable with controlling balls out of the air
 - have a potential passing range from 20-40 yards
 - pass and dribble with a variety of surfaces and are now capable of disguising both
 - The more advanced ten year olds start to develop pre-control vision and an understanding of what to do next before they receive the ball
 - start to move away from each other in order to create space

At U10, the children begin to understand the need for practice. At U6/U8, children go outside to “play.” At U10, they go outside to “practice” because they realize they have deficiencies. At this age, they can “make moves” to fake other players out, they can pass and dribble with inside/outside/top of foot. They begin to develop pre-control vision; they know what they are going to do with the ball before they get it. You will start to see much more use of the entire field – not as much “bunch ball” at this age, although they still like to gravitate toward the ball.



U10 Players

- **Challenges for U10 players:**
 - still lack an understanding of depth in their ability to create space and support teammates
 - still developing an understanding of combination play and the use of teammates to overcome their opponents

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The game is still one-dimensional at the U10 level. Very seldom do the players look behind them to drop a pass; everything moves forward. They still aren't sure how to use each other to overcome the pressure of opponents.

You can start to see the progression. We emphasize technical skills from U6 through U10. Most of them aren't ready for the tactical side of the game until U12, although there are exceptions. When they are ready for the tactical side of the game, we want them to be physically able to perform the skill.



What Can I Expect?

- Conducted by volunteers
- Less than 10% of the volunteer coaches in the United States have had any type of coaching education

Almost everyone in CBYSA is a volunteer – Board members, League Reps, coaches. They spend a lot of time and money working to give children a positive playing experience.

Please, do not criticize the volunteers; be ready with suggestions to help solve any problems that may arise.



How to be a Supportive Parent

Supportive Soccer Parents



- Give consistent encouragement and support regardless of degree of success, level of skill, or time on the field.
- Stress the importance of respect for coaches.
- Highlight the critical nature of contributing to the team and its success.
- Leave coaching to coaches and do not criticize coaching strategies or team performance.
- Avoid putting pressure on children about playing time and performance.



Criticizing the coach in any way undermines your child's respect for the coach.

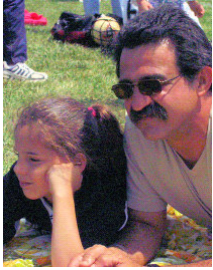
At U6/U8, children don't really identify with "team;" however, you can encourage responsibility for being at practices, remembering shin guards and water bottle, etc.

CBYSA has a rule that all children get to play 50% of the game; however, we have given coaches some leeway. If a child is never at practice, the coach can limit playing time. We do not want to send the message that it is ok to miss practice because you'll get to play anyway. We want to teach the children soccer, but also citizenship. Coaches have been asked to explain to parents and players the expectations for playing time if the need arises.



Being a Good Soccer Parent

- **Ensure a balance** in your child's life, encouraging participation in multiple sports and activities while placing academics first.
- **Emphasize enjoyment**, development of skills and team play.
- **Leave coaching to coaches.**
- **Be realistic** about your child's future in sports.
- **Be there** when your child looks to the sidelines for a positive role model.



Sports Done Right™ The Maine
Center for Sport and Coaching

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There are many more academic scholarships than athletic scholarships, so place academics first in your child's life. Note the comment about multiple sports, especially when they are young. Each sport uses different muscle groups and mental strategies. Many times, one sport supports growth in another.

Emphasize enjoyment; recreational soccer is all about fun. It should be fun for parents as well.

Let the coach, coach.

Be realistic about your child's future in sports. Very few players get sports' scholarships. Most children don't even think about the possibility until they are 15.

Your child can look to the sideline at any moment. Will they see a positive role model?



Equipment for Parents

Basic needs for soccer parents

- Comfortable lawn chair
- Comfortable clothing
- A sense of humor and joy



Guidelines for Soccer Parents

Have you ever seen a truly gifted player sitting on the bench on any team unless the game was out of reach or the player was injured or winded? - Aicinena, 124

1. Cheer
2. Relax and Let Them Play
3. Yelling Directions = Distraction
4. Have Reasonable Expectations
5. Meet with the Coaches

The greatest gift that you can give to your children throughout their sporting involvement is support. When asked what it is that they would most like from their parents in terms of support, most children suggest encouragement and acceptance of their choices.

—Australian Sports Commission



Constantly yelling, “Go, go, go; kick it hard; boot it; pass it up; pass it back; shoot; move left; move right,” is very distracting to young players. RELAX and let them play.

Have reasonable expectations for the age group – don’t expect U6 players to pass.


If you have an issue with your child's coach, please do not approach them after a game or practice. They need time to analyze. Call him/her later and set up a time to meet.

Sometimes, parents try to live out their own dreams through their children. If you are pushing your child too hard, you may be living YOUR dream instead of letting your child live his/hers.

If you take credit for wins and blame for losses, you may be too involved with the team.

If you are trying to coach your child when they know more about the sport than you do, you are trying too hard.

If you get nervous before your child's game or verbally critical of an official, you may be taking the game too seriously. RELAX and let them play.



Shouting from the sidelines

Many things shouted from the sideline – even positive – come across as negative to the players.

Ian Bradley, ISA Coaching Director during presentation at ISA Annual meeting

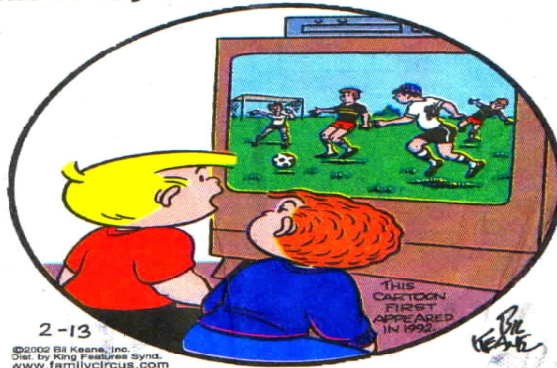
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The players can't understand many of the things we shout from the sideline; they just see us yelling. Because we don't normally yell at our children, when we yell from the sidelines, it comes across as negative.



The Family Circus

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**"The reason they can play that good
is their parents aren't yelling at
them from the sidelines."**



Teaching Sportsmanship

Six things you can do to show your child (and other parents) what being "a good sport" means:

- Cheer for all the children, even those on the other team.
- Talk to parents of the other team; they are not the enemy.
- Be a parent, not a coach: resist the urge to critique. This includes motivating, psyching your child for practice, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc.
- Thank the officials.
- Keep soccer in its proper perspective: Soccer should not be larger than life for you.
- Have fun: That is what the children are trying to do!





Game Day

Sideline Behavior

- Children want cheerleaders to applaud their success, not adults yelling instructions. Think of the soccer field as a playground and not as a sports venue.
- What's appropriate at a sports stadium with adult athletes is NOT appropriate for young children at play.
- Focus on the process of playing and not the outcome.

"When watching a youth sports game, if you can't carry on a normal conversation with the person next to you then you're probably paying too much attention to the game."
- Bigelow, Moroney, & Hall, 2001



Children want cheerleaders to applaud their success, not adults yelling instructions. Think of the soccer field as a playground or park and not as a sports venue. Think about how you watch your child play at the park and bring that relaxation and fun to the soccer field.

Focus on what they are learning and the fun they are having and not on the score.



Kids Don't Care Who Wins

"Asked what embarrasses them most, every single child surveyed listed parents hollering plays or instructions from the sideline or stands."
Mom's Team.com

Sideline Behavior

- Unlike adult games, kids do not see the other team as the enemy.
- Don't keep score, the kids don't regard it as that important.
- Don't care who wins or loses, they are having fun and that is the objective.

"Youth sports provide an ideal avenue for early exposure to setback and allows supportive adults to offer guidance with the stakes not nearly as high as they will be sometimes later on in life." - Abrams



What is FUN for them is more important than what is FUN for you!



The Ride Home

- **Never reward** what you perceive as success.
- **Never punish** what you perceive as failure.
- **Don't evaluate** your child's performance, he or she is playing to have fun, not to earn a grade! If he or she had fun, the day was a success.

"The youngsters are a captive audience in the back seat on the way home, but they deserve to ride in peace without being unwilling victims of their parents' "station wagon syndrome."

Abrams, 2002





Good Questions on the Way Home

"If parents receive one-word answers or silence, they can be sure that their child feels trapped with no way out." Silby, 2000

- **Did you have fun today?**
- **What did you think you did well today?**
- **Did you learn any new moves?**

If you are greeted with the sound of silence, give off the gentle sounds of approval, be sure he/she knows you are there for him/her.

"Parents need to understand that the period following practice and competition is a crucial time for a young athlete. It's important she be given the freedom to process it on her own."
- Silby, 2000



Three things you might say to your child after a game:

1. I love you.
2. I'm glad I got to see you play.
3. Where would you like to eat?



How Do I Start?

Find out why YOUR child wants to play soccer! Ask the real questions?

- Why do YOU want to play soccer?
- What is fun about soccer for YOU?
- What do YOU like to hear from ME before, during and after YOUR GAMES?

"Everyone forgets today's score before the end of the season, but decades later the children still remember the adults whose affection and support remained steadfast regardless of the scoreboard."
Abrams, 2002




When you ask the above questions, don't be surprised if the answers include: I want to play because my friends do, to get exercise, to compete. I don't want to hear you on the sidelines, I just want you to be there to watch me play.



Meeting Your Child's Needs

Once you have asked the questions, LISTEN to the answer and learn....



92% of student-athletes believe participating in sports helps them to be a better person.

97% of student-athletes say the main reason they play sports is because it is fun and exciting.

"The Athletes Speak Survey 2002-2004," a survey of pilot projects conducted by the National Center for Student Aspirations involving Maine and Massachusetts student athletes.

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You WILL Be Surprised.

- Young players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- Somebody will come off the field in need of a toilet. Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet (U8).
- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the players' attention. (and 99% of the parents)
- Some players will wear their uniform to bed, to school and everywhere else.
- A player will forget to go on the field, another will forget to go off.
- Players will still stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game – they are not competing, they are having fun.
- If you drive someone else's child to a game, he/she may not remember after the game to look for you to get home.



"Most children play to have fun and be with their friends. They do not play to entertain the adults, boost the adults' egos or improve the family's social status in the community." - Abrams, 2002

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What about Referees?

Everyone sees the play differently.

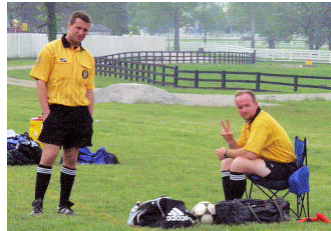
- The main goal of the referee is to make the game **safe** and **fun** for the children.
- Being a referee is not as easy as it appears.
- Remember, many referees are brothers and sisters or parents.
- Recognize that the referee is doing his/her best.
- The goal is to let the game be played so children can have FUN!



Let the Referee Call the Game

Referees deserve respect and support too!

- Helping the referee to call the trip or a foul only confuses children.
- Disagreeing hurts your child's respect for the referee, and may hurt the view of the referee towards your child's team.
- Criticism causes referees to quit rather than become better. Many referees quit due to being yelled at by parents.
- As you cheer for the players, cheer for the referees too.

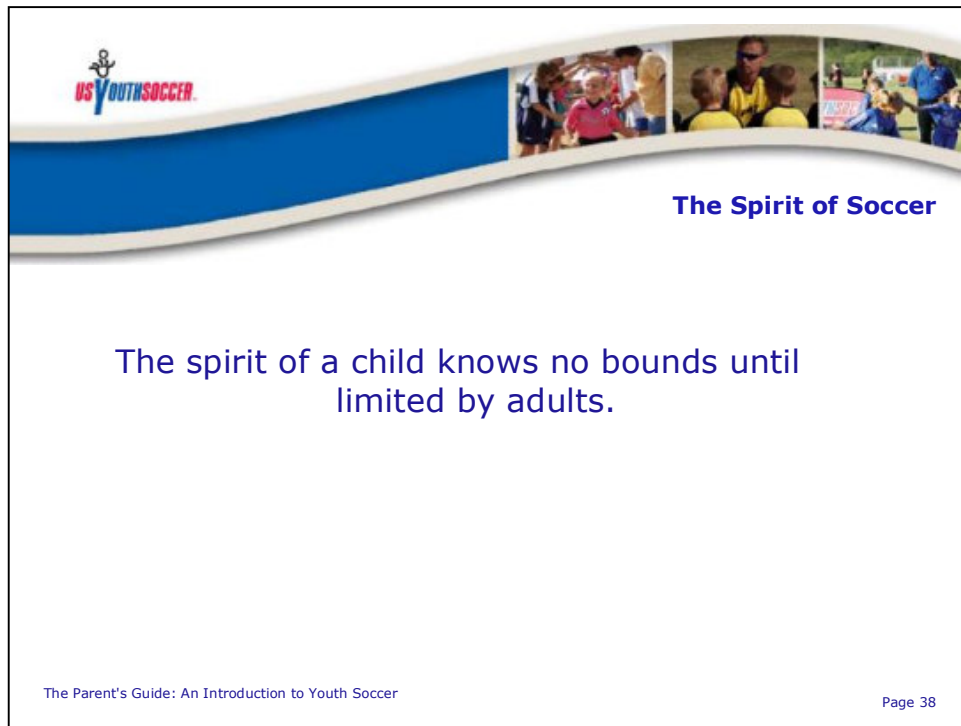


"Parents and coaches need to remember that if officials can hear profanity and other verbal abuse directed at them when a call goes against the team, the children on the field can also hear it."

Abrams, 2002

The playing performance of your child may suffer if parents are yelling at the referee from the sidelines. When parents are yelling at the referee, the focus of the players is pulled away from the game to the referee and they don't play as well. And, the referees don't perform as well either.

Just like players, referees quit because of criticism and yelling. Even the adults get tired of it and quit.



The executive board of CBYSA feels these classes provide a valuable service to our children and to our community. Again, thank you for taking the time to complete it.

To complete the program:

Print the question & answer sheet from the website, complete the sheet, and return it to Helena Young, 4046 Avenue B.