

# Coach Guide

[The general flow of events during the season](#)

[Policies and Procedures](#)

[For Your Health and Safety](#)

[Lightning Policy and Procedure](#)

[CODE OF CONDUCT FOR T&C SOCCER COACHES](#)

[ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY](#)

[Consequences of Violations](#)

[Referee relations \(addendum for Soccer\)](#)

[Schedule, Reschedule and Cancellation Policies](#)

[Rainout procedures and rescheduling of rain-cancelled games](#)

[Game scheduling for Academy \(U9-U10\), Division III \(U11-U18\), and Division II \(U11-U18\)](#)

[Miscellaneous Lost & Found](#)

[Contact Info for T&C Soccer](#)

[Planning for the season](#)

[Getting registered as a Coach](#)

[Parent Orientation Meeting](#)

[Suggestions for dealing with parents](#)

[Equipment](#)

[Coach Equipment](#)

[Player Equipment](#)

[Ball](#)

[Shin guards](#)

[Soccer shoes](#)

[Other](#)

[Practices](#)

[Coaching basics](#)

[Resources for becoming a better coach](#)

[Rules of Play](#)

[Field Duty for the Team and Coach on Duty](#)

[Appendix](#)

[Pre-season letter to team parents](#)

## The general flow of events during the season

- Register yourself as a coach volunteer in the T&C registration system. Registration details below.
- Commissioner notifies you of your team assignment after you complete your background check. After that has cleared, the office will open your access to team info on the website. See <https://sportsillustratedplay.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/201363243-SI-Play-Team-Website> for a guide on accessing and using the site. Use the filters and roster info to get your parent and player info and optionally to send out email to your team.
- If a player drops out/gets a refund/etc. before the season starts, please let your age group commissioner and the office know so a player on the waitlist can be added to your team.
- Contact players and collect player info (welcome letter)
- Inform parents of needed gear for practices and games, find a team parent, set up preseason team meeting
- Useful T&C info and resources for coaches and parents
  - FAQ <http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1110806-faq>
  - Game reschedules and cancellations <http://tcsoccer.org/help.php?coaches> Note the difference between **reschedule** (more than a week notice) and **cancel/ reschedule** (after 11:59pm the Monday before the game).
  - <http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1173988-field-status> for field status, maps, and field policies.
  - Electronic notification of field status is available by following TCSportsAustin on Twitter. <http://twitter.com/TCSportsAustin/> There are tools and apps for many smartphones that will forward announcements about field status when T&C updates those through the twitter account.
- The Division Coordinator will schedule a coaches' meeting; this is the preseason meeting for coaches. We'll cover rules, expectations, hopefully distribute uniforms, and answer questions.
- Practice arrangements differ based on age group and competition level. See the "[Practices](#)" section below for further guidance.

## Policies and Procedures

### TOWN & COUNTRY OPTIMIST COMPLEX POLICIES

#### Town & Country Facility Rules

#### For Your Health and Safety

No glass containers allowed on the Town and Country Optimist Sports Complex.

No alcoholic beverages allowed on the Town and Country Optimist Sports Complex.

No pets allowed on the Town and Country Optimist Sports Complex.

No smoking at the Town and Country Optimist Sports Complex.  
No noisemakers allowed on the Town and Country Optimist Sports Complex.  
Park in designated areas only and follow all parking lot directional arrows.  
Pick up litter.  
Display good sportsmanship.

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## **Lightning Policy and Procedure**

Town and Country Optimist Club

The Town & Country Sports Complex is now monitored by a Thor Guard lightning prediction and warning system. The Thor Guard system measures atmospheric conditions at the T&C campus and surrounding area. When the conditions reach the threshold for potential lightning, an alarm will sound (one long blast of the sirens) and the strobe lights will begin to flash.

**Steps to take** when the Thor Guard sirens and lights are activated:

- 1. EVERYONE on the T&C campus must take immediate shelter, either in cars or in the T&C restrooms (these are the safest structures).**
- 2. Only when the Thor Guard system gives the 'all clear' (3 short siren blasts and the lights go off), may activities resume.**

**It is the responsibility of every adult on campus to comply with these steps, and to ensure that every child also complies.** This is a Zero Tolerance safety condition for participating at T&C. Failure to comply is to do so at your own safety risk, and with possible expulsion from the T&C campus and future activities.

You may view the the status of the T&C Thor Guard system from your smart phone or PC at this link: [tandcsports.thormobile7.net](http://tandcsports.thormobile7.net)

[http://www.thorguard.com/sheets/2013\\_ThorMobile\\_Info\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.thorguard.com/sheets/2013_ThorMobile_Info_Sheet.pdf)

[http://www.thorguard.com/pdf/Thor\\_Guard\\_Interpretation\\_Chart.pdf](http://www.thorguard.com/pdf/Thor_Guard_Interpretation_Chart.pdf)

### **Additional Common Sense Steps**

In the event that you see lightning in the vicinity or hear thunder, and the Thor Guard system has not activated:

1. Notify the Coach on Duty at the green soccer shed and they will contact the Commissioner on on Duty or Commissioner on on Call. (COD) for your sport.

2. The Commissioner will consider this information and determine if activities should be suspended. The Commissioner may use additional sources of information, such as the 'Weatherbug' app, in making the decision. Lightning strikes within 10 miles identified by the app warrant suspension of activities.

3. If the Commissioner decides to suspend activities, he/she will retrieve the bullhorn from the lightning box by the main office, and trigger 5 long blasts. Upon hearing these blasts, EVERYONE on campus, across all sports, must immediately seek shelter in cars or restrooms.

4. The Commissioner who initiated the suspension of activities will communicate the 'all clear' 30 minutes after the last reported thunder or lightning. This will be done through 2 blasts on the bullhorn.

### **When Playing Off Site**

Obey all lightning policies in place at any park, field, facility or event.

If there is no published lightning policy at the offsite venue (i.e. a public park or schoolyard), upon hearing thunder or seeing lightning immediately suspend play and direct your team to find shelter in cars or enclosed buildings. Do not resume activity until 30 minutes after the last observance of thunder or lightning.

It is recommended that coaches have a smartphone app, such as Weatherbug. If lightning strikes are detected within 10 miles, suspend play and direct your team to cars or enclosed buildings.

T&C takes the safety of all of our patrons very seriously and we ask that all of our volunteers make sure they understand the policy and procedure and forward this information to your coaches, team parents, and managers.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR T&C SOCCER COACHES**

- I agree to understand and abide by the bylaws, rules and policies of T&C Soccer Association;
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of soccer and I will teach these rules to my players;
- I will encourage safe, competitive, fair play, and good sportsmanlike conduct at all times. My words and actions will portray a positive role model for children and youth by demonstrating respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity;
- I will not verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse a child;
- I will treat all children, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or disability with respect, compassion and kindness;

- I acknowledge that T&C has a "zero tolerance" policy towards referee abuse. Referee decisions will be accepted without anger, no matter how unfair they may seem. I agree to immediately leave the complex if so instructed by a referee or other official. I will not attempt to intimidate, coerce, or threaten referees or other officials through my words, behavior, or actions;
  - I will not use tobacco products during team activities in the presence of children or parents nor will I possess or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during team activities;
  - I will instruct parents in proper behavior at games. The parent's ability to watch their children play soccer is dependent on proper adult behavior. If the referee or other official takes steps to control the behavior of the spectators, I will support the referee or other league official and inform the errant spectator(s) that they must leave the complex (if so directed by the referee or league official) until the end of the game. I understand that the actions of the spectators watching my team play may result in disciplinary action against me.
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## **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

All persons responsible for a team (coaches, assistants, team parents, and team managers) and spectators shall support the referee team. Failure to do so undermines the referee's authority and potentially creates a hostile environment for the players, the referees, and spectators.

Town and Country has a zero tolerance policy towards referee abuse. Any dissent toward the decisions of the referee will not be tolerated. There is to be absolutely no disputing calls during the game. At halftime or at the end of the game, the coach of the team may ask a referee to explain a rule(s) in a polite and constructive way. This is not an invitation to debate.

Polite and friendly feedback can be given a referee but sarcasm, harassment, or intimidation will not be tolerated. There is to be no yelling at the referee ever. No one is to address the referee or enter the field of play during the game with the following exceptions: Responding to a referee who initiates communication, asking for a substitution, or pointing out emergencies or safety issues.

## **Consequences of Violations**

No warnings have to be issued by the referee before application of any penalty. The penalty for violation of this policy may result in verbal warnings, cautions, ejection from the game, dismissal from coaching at T&C, or possibly some criminal charges. Violations will be brought to the attention of the D&P Committee.

### **Referee relations (addendum for Soccer)**

Games are run by referees starting at U7, and get a full set of 3 referees at U9. Make sure you and all parents are familiar with the Zero Tolerance Policy above, as a team's coaches are responsible for the behaviour of the parents. Keep in mind that the referees are often young teenagers, and may be as young as 11 years old. They should not be expected to deal with irate adults, whether coaches or parents.

Everybody at T&C is learning and trying to improve, including the referees. Please let the parents and players know that if anyone from the team needs to interact with the referees, it will be the coach. If you don't understand a call, ask the referee "Ref, what's the call?" If you still don't get it, ask at half time or after the game; we coaches can learn, too. Just about every interaction with a referee should be a request for information, for them to help you understand.

If you find yourself wanting to tell the referee that the call was lousy or wrong, it's better to stay quiet. Has a referee ever changed the call based on the yelling of a coach, parent, or player? If you absolutely know that a referee is getting something wrong, you'll want to talk to or email the Referee Assignors or the person in charge of Referee Development. Contact information for them is on the T&C Soccer website on the Board Members page (<http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1110794-board>).

The T&C Referee Assignors want to know about gaps in the knowledge or execution of our referees, so sharing helpful information with them is appreciated if presented in a non-aggressive manner. Instead of insisting that a referee is incompetent, ask the Assignor for a rules clarification to make sure you understand the rule, and if they confirm your knowledge, explain that you were a bit confused because of the calls at a recent game. Explain the situation to them and give them the game field and time so they can see who the referees were and then observe and mentor those referees to help them improve.

### **Things the referees want coaches to know.**

- If you have questions about rules or how the game will be run, ask them before the game begins. If it's a particularly hot day and you want to arrange a water break at the quarter (for ages that normally only break at half-time), ask the referee at the check-in before the game and if they approve, they'll ask the other coach for their approval. If you're unsure when you can substitute a player, ask at check-in.
- Please stay off the field unless you are waved on by the referee. It can be difficult to resist the urge to run out if a player is on the ground, but if a player is injured, the referee will

wave you on; they might not do so if the player just has the wind knocked out of them for a few seconds. If the referee doesn't see the down player, alert the Asst. Referee on the sideline.

- If you have players with special needs or conditions that may come up during play, discuss these with the referee before the game. This would include players who might need to leave the field of play without referee's permission for health reasons (diabetic feeling like blood sugar is low, asthma attack, etc.). Player health is obviously more important than a foul or imbalanced play.

If you or your players (or their parents) are interested in becoming a referee (or think they can do better than our current refs), there's info on how to become a referee at

<http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1110811-referees-corner>

and <http://www.stsr.org/website/default.aspx> .

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## ***Schedule, Reschedule and Cancellation Policies***

U7 and Up - All game reschedules MUST be finalized by **midnight Monday** the week of the game in order for referees to be scheduled in a timely manner. If you must cancel a game within a week of playing, please contact the Referee Assignor at [tcsoccerassignor@yahoo.com](mailto:tcsoccerassignor@yahoo.com). Other than that, you are free to change game times or reschedule games as often as you would like.

NOTE: All pending reschedule requests for the upcoming weekend automatically expire at midnight Monday (the exception to the 24-48 hour period).

See the [TCSoccer.org](http://TCSoccer.org) web site for additional information.

<http://tcsoccer.org/help.php?coaches>

## **Rainout procedures and rescheduling of rain-cancelled games**

Games cancelled due to the closing of the T&C fields will automatically be rescheduled for U4-U10. Academy, Div III and other inter-league games will not be automatically rescheduled and those teams should follow the reschedule procedure.

## **Game scheduling for Academy (U9-U10), Division III (U11-U18), and Division II (U11-U18)**

Whereas Division IV (U4-U10) play only other T&C teams, the Academy, Division III, and Division II teams play in a league made up of teams in the Greater Austin area (within about a 75 mile radius of Austin). The league is organized by CAYSA (<http://www.caysa.org/>). Each coach will receive

instructions from the CAYSA age group vice president before each season. The scheduling process the last few years has been the following:

- The CAYSA VP sends link to GotSoccer with a proposed schedule. Most of the time the coaches will follow the proposed schedule, but if the coach knows dates when his/her team may be missing several players or playing in a tournament, the coach may contact the other coach to suggest an alternate date.
- For each team's home games, the home team coach/manager contacts his/her club's registrar requesting dates and times. Be sure to indicate the team name and age group so the field scheduler knows how large a field is needed.
- After the field scheduler returns a list of the scheduled fields, the coach contacts each visiting team coach, asking the coach to confirm the date and time. If the date and time are not good for the other team, dialog ensues and the process repeats until a mutually acceptable date and time are selected, and an available field is scheduled.
- After ALL of your team's home games are scheduled, send the list to the CAYSA VP for entering into the official league schedule. They don't like to receive them one at a time.
- Note that if you look on the T&C field schedule for your team, you will see only the home games. You need to refer to the CAYSA league schedule to see all of your games. **BE SURE THAT YOUR PARENTS KNOW WHERE TO LOOK FOR THE FULL SCHEDULE.** If you don't, you may be missing players because the parents did not realize their child had a game that day, particularly in the first year that your team plays a CAYSA schedule, because the parents won't be familiar with the system.
- If you have preferences, such as avoiding Saturday mornings because of coach or player conflicts, it is best to contact all the coaches scheduling your away games immediately after you receive the proposed schedule. By doing so, you can avoid unnecessary churn where you ask for a reschedule, and you increase the likelihood that the other team can find an available field at their club during the times that most suit you.
- If it is necessary to reschedule games for any reason, including rainouts, you repeat the same process you used to schedule the original game. Be sure to notify the CAYSA VP of the reschedule so he/she can update the league schedule.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Lost & Found**

The lost & found for soccer is located in the referee shed, in the same building as the concessions and restrooms, between fields 20 and 22. Please encourage parents to label soccer balls and water containers with names and phone numbers.

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## Contact Info for T&C Soccer

The current version of this information is on the Board Members page on the T&C Soccer website. <http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1110794-board>

There will also be a contact information sheet in the referee room near the 20's fields for use by the Coach-on-Duty on game days.

## Planning for the season

### Getting registered as a Coach

Once you have decided to be a coach or an assistant coach for T&C (thank you!), there are two steps you must accomplish. The first is to register in the T&C player system, the second is a background check. Here are those details:

#### Step 1: Register in the T&C player system

If you're already assigned to a team, you've already done step 1. Go on to Step 2.

Go to the place where you registered your children, and make sure you register yourself as an adult.

<http://www.sportssignup.com/Town-and-Country-Optimist-Club-Online-Registration.start>

Select "coach" or "assistant coach" for the position. Once this is done, we can add you to the team as the coach.

#### Step 2: Register for a background check

After you have been assigned to a team by your age group commissioner, a coach account will be created for you by T&C's registrar in STYSA's system at GotSoccer.com. You will be sent an email via GotSoccer with instructions on how to verify your information in that system and authorize the background check. If you have coached with T&C Soccer before, you may already have a GotSoccer account that's associated with T&C; if so, that will be used and you will receive a notification if you need to update anything. If you have multiple GotSoccer accounts, the one with TXS at or near the end will most likely be the one that's used.

There is no charge to you for this, it will be paid by T&C.

BGCs will be good for 2 years, so you will not need to do this for a while.

## Parent Orientation Meeting

All coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion in your living room, or could be combined with a team practice. Whatever the format, the time you invest will pay benefits for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, the following information could be put into a letter to parents/players, but a face to face meeting is preferable.

Purposes of a parent orientation meeting include the following:

- Enables parents to understand the objectives and goals of the program
  - Enables parents to become acquainted with you, the coach
  - Informs parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport
  - Informs parents of your expectations of them and of their child
  - Enables you to address any concerns of the parents
  - Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players
  - Allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.)
- Things to consider when organizing a parent orientation meeting:
- Hold it early in the season; preferably before the first team practice.
  - Having the players present is optional.
  - Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
    - team roster (with names of parents and players, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses)
    - schedule of practices and games
    - team goals/rules
  - Be prepared and be organized to conduct the meeting efficiently.

Important points to cover in your meeting:

- Coach introduction
  - introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time) - give some background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience)
- Coaching philosophy
  - discuss what you consider to be the value of this sport
  - discuss your methods for teaching skills (describe a typical practice)
  - state the importance you assign to having fun and developing skills
  - state the importance you assign to winning and losing
  - discuss any team rules and guidelines, disciplinary procedures
  - discuss your philosophy regarding player rotation, substitution, playing time
- Specifics of the program
  - practice schedule (how many per week?, how long?)
  - game schedule (how many?, when do they begin?)
  - minimum playing time (T&C rule: each player must be given the opportunity to play at least 50% of the game time for each half they are present)
  - equipment required (e.g. shin guards, ball, soccer shoes, water bottle)
  - inherent risks (soccer is a contact sport, albeit a relatively safe one)
- Team management
  - ask for volunteers as assistant coaches
  - ask for volunteers as team parents (snack schedule, parties, end of season trophies, etc.)
  - set up telephone tree and/or car pooling system

Discuss COACH'S responsibilities, for example:

- Demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship

- Treat each player fairly
- Have organized practices and teach soccer fundamentals appropriate to the age group
- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem
- Help each player set individual and team goals that are realistic
- Give parents a schedule of practices and games in a timely fashion
- Allow each player to play half of every game at a minimum
- Respect the referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself in a controlled manner on the field

Discuss PLAYER'S responsibilities, for example:

- Attend practices/games regularly, and to arrive on time
- Bring proper equipment to each practice and game. Must wear shinguards completely covered by socks.
- Inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a practice/game
- Make each practice a challenge to improve
- Work toward good sportsmanship and teamwork
- Respect the referees
- Be supportive of all teammates all of the time.

Discuss PARENTS' responsibilities, for example:

- Transport your child to and from practices/games. Be on time to drop off and pickup.
- Be supportive of all the players (criticism does not improve performance)
- Help your child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- Focus on mastering skills and having fun, not on winning
- Attend games and cheer the team
- Refrain from criticizing opponents; be positive with all the players and coaches from both teams
- Respect the referees (they will make mistakes, but they are doing their best; if you feel you are better qualified, see the Referee Assignor--T&C can always use more certified referees)
- Refrain from coaching your child during games. (Try to understand and respect the difference between the roles of the coach and the parent.) Answer any questions from the parents.

## **Suggestions for dealing with parents**

Coaching is exciting and rewarding, but occasionally you may experience difficulty with parents. Some parents may want their child to play more, others may question your judgment as a coach. Whatever the concern, a parent is generally just looking out for their child, often at your expense. Don't be discouraged. There are some things you can do to open up communication and make dealing with parents a positive aspect of your coaching duties.

1. Have a parent meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. See the section: "Parent Orientation Meeting" for tips on how to do this well. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to the upcoming season.
2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
3. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement. (If you have a preference for a certain time to voice these concerns, such as after practice, make this clear at the Parent Orientation Meeting.)
4. Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. No coach can please everyone!
5. Know the club and game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
6. Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, then thank them for it.
7. Resist unfair pressure. It is your responsibility as coach to make the final decision. This doesn't mean that you can't still listen to parents.
8. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.
9. Ask the parents not to criticize their children during practice or a game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
10. Don't blame the players for their parents' actions.
11. Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
12. Most importantly, be fair! If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect, and that of their parents as well.

Remember that you will be dealing with all types of children, and with parents having different backgrounds and ideals. The challenge for you as a coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

## **Equipment**

### **Coach Equipment**

We don't expect new coaches to run out and buy everything on the list below. Look over the list and the important things will jump out at you. Most coaches amass a pretty good collection over

time, though. If you're brand new, ask your age group commissioner if T&C Soccer has any new coach kits available for your age group.

1. A large BAG for all of the items listed below!
2. Players' MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS. These are not required except for some tournaments. It's best to have them for any child whose parent will not be in attendance at every practice and game; if a child gets hurt and needs professional care, you'll need the form if the parent is not present. If you get them, bring them with you to all practices and games.
3. MEDICAL KITS - A simple kit for games and practices is a good idea for every coach.

A kit should include:

- Ice (and 'zip-lock' bags)\*\* - or have a parent bring each game.
- Band aids
- Vaseline
- Sterile pads
- Adhesive tape
- Elastic wraps
- Antibiotic ointment

\*\* If you use chemical cold packs, be careful about applying them directly to skin; some types are exceedingly cold!

4. Age appropriate soccer balls. Save one for games and get a ball bag for practice balls. Each player should have their own ball and bring it to practice and games; but bring any old spares that you may have to practice because someone is likely to forget theirs.
5. Shin guards - a spare pair of old ones will cover for a forgetful player!
6. A stopwatch or a watch or phone with that ability, for timing player substitutions during games.
7. Practice cones
8. Spare shirts or scrimmage shirts (pinnies) for practice. It's best to have at least a couple of colors other than your team's jersey colors so you will have one that is a different color than the other team's jerseys.
9. Pump and inflating needle - sometimes the game ball is as hard as a rock or too soft and may need a little "tuning"; the same goes for the balls kids bring to practice.
10. A clipboard (for practice plans, medical release forms, substitution schedules) are helpful items.
11. U9 and older: Goalkeeper jersey or scrimmage vest.
12. U9 and older: Goalkeeper's gloves - an inexpensive pair is a useful addition to your game bag.
13. Rec+ and U11 and older: Player cards and roster
14. WATER should be available during practice and at the game. Have the players bring their own water bottles (but keep an extra bottle in your bag or cooler for the occasional forgetful player). Alternatively, have your team parent organize a schedule among the parents to provide water and cups.
15. A simple SNACK schedule should be organized by the team parent for game days. Discourage turning snacks into a financial hardship for some parents. Orange or apple slices, or seedless grapes are good choices and a treat for post game.

## Player Equipment

### Ball

Encourage each player to have his or her own ball and to use it often, not just during team practice. Players will not derive maximum benefit from practice unless they each have their own ball for warm-ups and individual drills.

Soccer balls come in a variety of sizes, each designated by a number:

- size #3 - U5, U6, U7, & U8
- size #4 - U9, U10, U11, & U12
- size #5 - U13 and older

### Shin guards

All players **MUST** wear shin guards covered by socks in all games and practices. The shin guards with plastic inserts offer additional protection, especially for the older player. Consider washability when selecting a shin guard.

### Soccer shoes

Baseball or football type shoes with square or rectangular cleats are not legal for soccer. An easy way to distinguish baseball shoes from soccer is to see if it has a cleat at the toe. If it does, then it is a baseball shoe. Soccer cleats for recreational play must be rubber or molded plastic (no metal cleats), and no less than 3/8 inch in diameter. Check your players' shoes for illegal cleats, protruding nails, or sharp edges, and rectify any problems before a referee discovers a violation and one of your players is forced to sit out a game. It has been reported that turf shoes (20+ smaller cleats) are easier on the feet and are certainly easier on the fields. Turf shoes may not provide as much traction on wet fields. For younger ages, regular athletic shoes are just fine.

### Water bottle (with player's name on it)

Fresh water should be available to your players at each practice and game. It is easier for the coach if each player provides his or her own water bottle.

### Other

For the safety of all participants

- Players **MAY NOT** play with a hard cast, padded or otherwise.
- Players **MAY NOT** wear any jewelry while on the playing field (the only exception will be medical needs jewelry, which should be taped down to prevent fingers from getting tangled or caught during play).
- Players **MAY NOT** play with any brace (knee or otherwise) that contains exposed metal or hard plastics.

## Practices

### Where to practice?

U9 and older teams receive weekly practice time at T&C as part of their registration. Refer to instructions in the [Coaches Corner](#) part of the T&C soccer website for instructions on how to request a practice field.

For younger teams, coaches need to find space for their practices. For some of the younger age brackets, a large backyard may work fine. The middle age groups may be able to use half a field or a playground at an elementary or middle school or an area park. Most of the school locations work on a first-come first served basis and some do not make their fields available for public use. If you plan on using a school field, call the school and verify their fields-use policy; most will tell you when fields are available and which fields are reserved for school use or simply unavailable. Since we try to form our teams on neighborhoods at these age brackets, one of the best ways is to just drive around and look for open field locations. If you or some of your players are in a neighborhood association, they may have access to some fields. Talk with the other coaches that have been around awhile. Another resource to consider is your Commissioner. Generally, they have coached in the area and may know of some hidden spots that they are willing to share.

## How long should we practice?

- **U4 and U5** are no practice ages. Use the first 10 minutes of game time for a mini practice and warm up.
- **U6** Practices are optional, but not necessary. No more than one per week and they should only last 30-45 minutes.
- **U7-U8** One practice per week of 45-60 minutes.
- **U9-U10** One or two practices per week (many just have one) of 60-75 minutes.
- **U11+** One or two practices per week of 75-90 minutes.

## Coaching basics

The importance of communicating with parents before the season begins is discussed above in Planning for the Season and Dealing with Parents. It's important enough to mention again. See Appendix for a sample preseason letter.

## Resources for becoming a better coach

- See the Coaches Corner page at T&C soccer website  
<http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1110809-coaches-corner>
- <http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1112087-education-and-certification>
- Coaching clinics
  - The South Texas Youth Soccer Association (STYSA) offers 6-hour modules for U6-U8 and U10-U12, as well as 20 hour courses for E licenses and up for more advanced material.
  - The National Soccer Coaches Association of America offers clinics in smaller chunks (from 2 ½ hours) for U5-U8, U5-U10, U6-U10, U9-U12, and many more. These are not as commonly offered in our area, but are also very good.  
NSCAA
- These 2 books are great for new coaches; some of our not-so-new coaches found them helpful, too.

For U4-U6, [The Baffled Parent's Guide to Coaching 6-and-Under Soccer](http://www.amazon.com/Baffled-Parents-Coaching-Under-Soccer/dp/0071456287/ref=pd_rhf_shvl_2)  
[http://www.amazon.com/Baffled-Parents-Coaching-Under-Soccer/dp/0071456287/ref=pd\\_rhf\\_shvl\\_2](http://www.amazon.com/Baffled-Parents-Coaching-Under-Soccer/dp/0071456287/ref=pd_rhf_shvl_2)

For all Div IV coaches, [Great Soccer Drills : The Baffled Parent's Guide](http://www.amazon.com/Great-Soccer-Drills-Baffled-Parents/dp/007138488X/ref=pd_sim_b_1)  
[http://www.amazon.com/Great-Soccer-Drills-Baffled-Parents/dp/007138488X/ref=pd\\_sim\\_b\\_1](http://www.amazon.com/Great-Soccer-Drills-Baffled-Parents/dp/007138488X/ref=pd_sim_b_1)

## Rules of Play

[U4/U5 Rules](#)

[U6 Rules](#)

[U7/U8 Rules](#)

[U9/U10 Rules](#)

### Teams in D2 and D3 (S2 and D1 also)

#### U11 - U12

9v9 <- *This is an exception to CAYSA's rules page*, team min/max is 8/14, size 4 ball, 30 minute halves; 1-2 practices per week, 60-90 minutes long.

#### U13 - U14

11v11, team min/max is 11/18, size 5 ball, 35 minute halves; 1-2 practices per week, 60-90 minutes long.

#### U15

11v11, team min/max is 11/18, size 5 ball, 40 minute halves; 1-2 practices per week, 60-90 minutes long.

#### U16

11v11, team min/max is 11/22, size 5 ball, 40 minute halves; 1-2 practices per week, 60-90 minutes long.

#### U17 - U19

11v11, team min/max is 11/22, size 5 ball, 45 minute halves; 1-2 practices per week, 60-90 minutes long.

There shall be no overtime or shootouts during the regular season play, and if the score is tied at the end of regulation play, the game shall be scored as a tie game.

**CAYSA ID cards, including a picture and signature, are required for all players and coaches. This is very important – the referees will almost always check each player before each game. Don't forget to bring them to the game!**

**After your team registration is complete through T&C**, there's the CAYSA registration, so they will include you in their schedule. The registrar will add your team to GotSoccer and send you login information for the team.

There are at least two other items you will need prior to the season starting. Player cards and the Kidsafe coaching pass. The Registrar creates both of these items. For player cards, you'll need to add a photo (head and shoulders) and laminate the cards, prior to the first game; these should be presented to the referee at the start of every game. Here's one process to follow to do this:

- Using a digital camera, take a picture of your entire team in a group. Make sure you can clearly see each player's face in the picture.
- Add the player photos to GotSoccer.
- The registrar will provide the cards to you printed with the photos.
- Laminate the cards. Cut out each card plus about 1/4" of plastic around the outside of the card. There may be trimming tools that make crisp straight lines. You'll probably want to round off each corner so there aren't sharp points. This can be done with scissors but is easier if the service has a tool for the purpose that lops off the corner.
- You are now ready to go. Punch a hole in an upper corner of each card (be sure you avoid the picture) about the size needed if you were putting the cards into a loose-leaf notebook. I then arrange the player cards alphabetically with my coaching KidSafe pass at the end and thread them onto a robust key ring. Now all the cards are easy to keep track of and when you hand them to the referee for pre-game check-in, they are in alphabetical order (like the game report) and there is minimal risk that one might get dropped and lost.

### **Print the Game Cards**

There is one more thing you must do if you are a Division III, or Division II coach. If you are the home team coach, you are responsible for bringing a pre-printed game report to each game. As a visiting coach I always bring one, too, just in case the home team coach forgets, which happens occasionally. The report is printed from the CAYSA league schedule. You give this to the referee before the game. It lists both team rosters, has space for recording the score, for the referees and coaches to sign after the game, and places for referee notes, such as listing any red and yellow cards that were given out. At the end of the game, *do not leave the card with the referee!* The winning coach or the home team coach, if there is a tie, mails the physical card (yes, snail mail with a stamp!) to the CAYSA VP. After each game both coaches are also encouraged to enter the score online (again, from the league schedule) so it is recorded faster. Entering the score online is not a substitute for mailing the physical card.

**Medical release forms, for whenever parents are not with the child and you are.**

Yes, we've mentioned this before, but nobody wants to end up in a situation with an injured child and no way to get medical care. Kids don't get hurt that often, but if it happens, this simple form makes a world of difference.

[http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0051/2644/Medical\\_release\\_form.pdf](http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0051/2644/Medical_release_form.pdf)

## **Field Duty for the Team and Coach on Duty**

T&C Soccer is able to operate due to the time spent by volunteers like you. Each team will now have a single 2-hour shift each season helping make our fields the safe, friendly environment we all enjoy. Each team's coach will supervise the team's volunteers during that shift. A handbook will be available with instructions for the coach and parents and a Commissioner will be on call in case a situation arises with which the Coach on Duty needs assistance or advice.

<http://soccer.tandcsports.org/page/show/1110810-volunteers-corner>

## **Appendix**

### **Pre-season letter to team parents**

Feel free to use as much or as little of the following letter as you like; it's just an example. Some folks prefer to break the contents of this one letter into 2 or 3 so the parents can get smaller doses or refer back to particular parts more easily. Make adjustments as necessary for your age group, such as the ball size and how soon before each game you want the players to arrive (teams playing Rec+, Division III, and Division II often arrive 30 minutes before the game so there is time to warm up and stretch out growing muscles along with the pre-game check-in by the referee).

Example pre-season letter:

Hi Armadillo parents!

I'm Bob Example and I'll be your child's soccer coach this season. I need a little information from you; I have lots of information for you; and I'd like to get together so everybody can meet. I'm sure there's more information here than you'll want in one dose, so if you could, please respond to the questions below and let me know whether or not you'll be able to make the meeting on Thursday (discussed below).

Some of these were on your registration form, but I'd like to confirm them and get more detail where it might be needed. If we have any players with a food allergy, we'll want to keep that in mind when it comes to snacks.

- (1) What's the best way to contact you for regular announcements? At the last minute or for emergencies?
- (2) Any food allergies or forbidden foods that might show up as snacks?
- (3) Any physical or other conditions I should know about before working with your child?
- (4) How much time has your child spent with a soccer ball or just kicking balls around?
- (5) How many seasons of experience do you have as a parent in T&C sports?
- (6) Is there any particular thing you'd like to see your child improve/learn this season?

- (7) Are you (or anyone in the family who will be attending games) certified in First Aid or CPR? We shouldn't need this, but I want to know who's available if we do.
- (8) Anything else you think I should know?

Please let me know if there are any corrections (nicknames) or additions (contact info) to make to the roster.

#### Team meeting and practices

I'd like to have a meeting this week so I can meet all of the kids, the kids can meet each other and maybe even play a little, and also to meet all the parents. I'll spend some time with the kids and get them playing a bit, and then spend time with the parents while they play.

#### Equipment

Regarding equipment, kids will each need a size 3 soccer ball, shin guards, socks that completely cover the shin guards, soccer pants (preferably black), some kind of athletic shoe, and a water bottle. A normal athletic-type shoe that is secure on their foot is fine. If you feel a need to buy a special soccer shoe, I urge you to get a turf shoe (lots of little nubby cleats intended for hard turf) rather than traditional soccer cleats. Cleats are intended for soft turf, and the only time we'll be on soft turf is if it's raining on us. There is some evidence that cleats worn on hard surfaces can be damaging to young feet; it's not compelling evidence yet, but I've seen older kids on my teams see drastic improvement in comfort by switching to a turf shoe. If you have doubts about your child's shoes, have them wear them to the team meeting.

#### Parent Expectations

1. Please try to get your child to games on time (this means 10-15 minutes before our start time). I know this can be difficult at times and impossible at other times. If you know your child will be late or won't be able to make it to a game, please let me know in advance if possible.
2. Help out with team volunteer opportunities. We have a number of things you can do to help.
3. Get involved in playing soccer with your child. This can be as simple as kicking the ball in the yard; use some chalk to draw an obstacle course/race track/train track with each other on the driveway and then play on it with the ball. Kids love it when their parents get involved. You might even have as much fun as they do.
4. Please encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, and officials at every game and practice. Please cheer for your child during games, but try to keep from yelling instructions to them. Remember this is their opportunity to enjoy playing in the game. Much of the fun is lost if their Mom or Dad is always yelling instructions; besides, if you yell their name with instructions, it's likely they'll stop playing to look at you rather than do whatever you're yelling at them to do.
4. Please let me know if you have a problem with me or something that is happening. Same holds true if your child isn't happy about something. I want to know if there is a problem right away. With this age group, very small things can cause a child to be upset. These problems can be fixed very easily if I know about them.
5. Safety is a primary concern for me. Unfortunately, I can't watch every child every second. If you see any situation that you believe is a safety concern, please step in and help. Make sure you follow up with me so I know what has happened.

If you feel I'm leaving something out of the coaching, doing something you don't like or don't understand, or just have comments, please let me know. If it's something that might be perceived as negative, please contact me in an environment when the kids are not around: e-mail or telephone.

I look forward to hearing from and meeting you all.

Bob Example

Incredible\_Bob@BobsAwesome.

phone number(s)