

ASA Coaching Guidelines

Summer 2016

Welcome to Summer Soccer and thank you for volunteering as a coach. Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with this document which outlines the structure of the league, basic requirements for coaching with ASA, and some helpful advice on coaching the game of soccer successfully.

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If you have any questions please contact coaching@amesburysoccer.com.

1. Amesbury Summer League Basics

Some of you are first timers, some returning summer coaches, and some experienced travel soccer coaches. It is our goal that the Summer League be kept as simple as possible, with an emphasis on fun and learning. This applies not only to the players but to the coaches as well. Please take the time to read and understand the material in this handout and ask questions if you have them!

Summer Philosophy: This is a recreational and developmental program. It's not travel or club soccer and should be treated differently. The #1 priority is for the players to have fun and develop skills. It is NOT all about winning! Treat each game day like a big party, not a tournament. This is the underlying philosophy with which you conduct your practices and game plans. Players should not specialize, and should play all the positions so that they develop an understanding of the entire game. This is especially true in the younger age groups (U10 and below), but may be relaxed somewhat in the U14/U16 group, where players may have already developed clear preferences.

Fields: ASA uses the Woodsom Farm fields at the discretion of the town. It is critically important that we keep the fields in good condition and well maintained if we are to continue in their good graces. Be sure to pick up water bottles, wrappers, etc. completely after each practice and game. Pick up after the other team that may have missed a bottle or two before you got there too, please. If the fields are muddy after a rainy spell, please do not do anything that would destroy them further! Either defer practice or move practice to an unused portion of the farm for the day.

Field Lining is a shared responsibility of all the teams. You will receive a field lining schedule at the beginning of the season. You are responsible for making sure the field is lined prior to the first game on the week your team is scheduled. You may assign this responsibility to a player, volunteer, or parent. You are responsible for seeing that the job is fulfilled. Referees have the right to cancel games if the fields do not have lines with adequate visibility to make reliable calls.

Game Day Parking - IMPORTANT!! On game days ALL coaches, parents, and volunteers MUST park their cars across the street (Lion's Mouth Road) in the grassy field. If anyone needs a one-time exception to this policy for any reason they must contact the Summer Team at summer@amesburyyouthsoccer.org at least 24 hours in advance. We need to leave the lot clear for park users, etc. This is an integral part of our usage agreement with the Town! Also, with all the kids around, it's just safer.

Game and Practice Equipment: ASA does not provide coaches with "take-home" equipment for the summer program. However, you will find pinnies, cones, and pug nets for use by all teams during practice in the equipment shed. Please place all equipment back in the shed after your practice so the next team may use it. VERY IMPORTANT – Fold the pug nets back up and place them in their carrying bags! We find we are regularly replacing Pug nets prematurely because they are left out. These things cost a lot more than they look like they should! If you find yourself struggling to fold them, please ask for help. We'll come down and show you how. The simple instructions are: place the pug net with the back mesh flat on the ground with both points facing up. Hold one point in each hand. Hold one hand still. Twist the net with the other hand. Once you get about ¼ way the net will snap past the resistance and fold together. If the net seems to be fighting you, use the same hand but twist the net in the opposite direction. One of the two directions will feel right. Resist the temptation to twist both ends of the net at once. This is doomed to failure!

Player Equipment: Players are each required to wear shin guards under socks, bring a ball, and bring enough water to each practice. Players may not play or practice without the proper equipment (particularly shin guards)! Shorts must not have any metal, snaps, or zippers. There should be no jewelry or metal on hair-bands or ace-wrap clips. Either sneakers or soccer cleats are optional in all age groups. No other footwear is allowed. Wingtips are definitely out, on the grounds of both safety and good taste. Baseball cleats may not be worn unless modified by cutting the toe-cleat off to the surface of the sole. The summer uniform shirt (or appropriately colored shirt/pinnie on a temporary basis) is to be worn on game days but is not required for practices

2. Player Health and Safety

CORI / KidSafe: All coaches in all programs are required to be registered under MYSA's CORI process. Once you register as a coach for the program we will send you instructions on how to complete the process.

ASA Head Injury Policy: The Amesbury Soccer Association adheres to MYSA's Head Injury Policy for all coaches. **All Coaches are required to complete the online course "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports"** on the CDC website at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/HeadsUpConcussion.html> This is an ANNUAL requirement!

Coaches are to submit the course completion certificate to the ASA Director of Coaching prior to the start of the season. Note: If you have completed an equivalent training module (NFHS, for instance) for participation in school athletics, that is considered an equivalent. Please inform the ASA Director of Coaching if this applies to you.

Minor Injuries: First Aid should be administered by parent responsible for player. Complete medical supplies are not provided, since most coaches are not doctors. Nevertheless, each coach should have clean fresh water to wash cuts and scrapes. There are ice packs and simple first-aid kits (including gauze, band-aids, etc.) available for the parent's use in the equipment shed at Woodsom. Coaches should carry basic first aid kits and plenty of ice-packs when at games or at remote fields.

Serious Injuries: DO NOT attempt to move the player until he/she is ready to move himself/herself. In some cases such a concussion or other head or neck injury, the player should not be allowed to move until EMS arrives. If the injury requires medical attention and the player's parent is not available (!), call 911 and accompany the player to the emergency room, bringing the Medical Release Form with you (this is part of the registration forms online). The injured player is the head coach's primary responsibility. Appoint a responsible adult to remain with the other players. If none of the parents are CORI certified, then you will need to get another coach present on the fields to take charge of your team until the players are claimed by their parents.

Incident Reporting: Any injuries, medical emergencies or other incidents should be reported to the Summer League Directors as soon as possible! Email summer@amesburysoccer.com with a brief description of the incident including time, date, location and the name(s) of those involved. We will follow up with you.

Thunderstorms and Rain: We will play in light rain, but if thunderstorms are threatening, or fields are unplayable games will be cancelled. It is up to the individual coach to make the call regarding their

team's practices. If you see lightning get everyone off the field IMMEDIATELY! *Make sure all players are off the field before you leave!* Team practice cancellations are the responsibility of the Coaches. On game days, the Summer Directors will inspect the fields for playability and cancellations will be emailed to coaches and players and posted on our website.

Hydration: Take frequent water breaks during practices and INSIST that your players drink fluids. Each player is responsible for bringing their own water, as there is no source of drinking water at the fields.

3. Summer League Practices

Each team will practice for one 1-hour session each week. It is important to begin and end on time, because in most cases there will be a team waiting for your field when you are done. Please do not practice more than this as a regular routine. It's unfair to the other teams in your age group and not in the summer soccer spirit of fair play. Keep in mind that the parents signed up with the promise of one hour, one day a week and they may mutiny if you ask them to do too much!

We will provide all practice session plans to you, as part of our overall curriculum effort. This frees up our coaches to concentrate on coaching, and ensures that all of our players are being introduced to consistent topics. We need all of our coaches to embrace the concept of, and consistently use, these practice plans!

Reinforce their play by praising success, not criticism. The players are here to develop, and it's pretty obvious that some players will "get it" faster than others. Remember that it's often easier to see opportunities from the sidelines than it is on the field. This is especially true if you're training a new or occasional player that is trying their best just to dribble the ball without tripping on it. Keep them interested and be patient. They'll get it eventually.

First Practice: You only get one chance to make a first impression, and this summer your first team practice is it. You'll make your summer a lot easier if you sit down with your parents and players for a few minutes prior to the first practice and set some expectations.

- You expect reliable attendance. Of course, since it's summer, families will be going on vacation and day trips. Except for this, players should be on time and ready to go. One of the important lessons team sports teach younger players is that player's responsibility to the team. A big part of this is holding up their end of the commitment by attending games and practices consistently. Parents are often concerned about rain and extremely hot days, and may not bring their kids to practice on those days. Assure them that you will be sensitive to the weather and will adapt the practice to the conditions. Make sure they know that unless they hear otherwise practices (and games) are on! Assure them that they can trust you to do the right thing, whatever the weather.
- Parents are responsible for attending practice with the kids. This is extremely important for those kids with listed medical issues which may require specialized knowledge. But it is also important for all players. We realize that in some cases, parents work schedules or other obligations might interfere with this. If so, the absent parent should work with another parent to be the responsible guardian for the day. Tell the parents to inform you who will be responsible for their child whenever they cannot attend.

- Communication is very important! Go through your roster and make sure you have the correct phone and e-mail addresses for each player. It's quite possible that some of the numbers or addresses include typos from transposing them into our database. Some families are more consistent e-mailers than others, so you will be doing yourself a big favor if you stress to your parents to regularly check their e-mails before each game or practice. You're already spending a large portion of your summer on the field and calling everybody whenever there is a change of schedule or news to share gets old fast. For important news like game cancellations it's a good idea to ask the parents to hit "reply" and send the mail back to you so you know its been read (not all e-mail clients respond correctly to the "Read receipt" request in Outlook). Then you can just call the ones who don't reply.
- Involve the parents with the team and with each other. Ask the parents to work out a rotation to bring fruits, snacks, freeze pops or whatever for halftime energy boost or end of game/practice refreshments. Getting them in the loop gives you one less thing to keep track of. IMPORTANT: Please make them aware of any food allergies listed on the registration forms! Make sure the parents of the allergic kid know what is going on.
- Inform parents about the CORI rules. During games there will be a spectator side and a team side indicated for each field. Any adult on the field during practices or games, or on the player's side of the field during games, must have a current CORI on file with Mass Youth Soccer Association (MYSA). Please be aware that there are new filing requirements to get CORI certification – it's not as simple as filling out an online form anymore.
- Sometimes siblings and friends will ask to participate in a practice session. This cannot be allowed unless that sibling or friend is also a current player in ASA's summer or travel program, and has the proper equipment. ASA insures all players through the Mass Youth Soccer program, and the way it is written if one uninsured player is on the field then no players on the field are insured.

Giving the parents an understanding of the expectations and rules up front will help prevent any misunderstanding later in the year. We really don't want to have to send anyone home on game day because they forgot their shin guards, or the wrong shoes.

4. Summer League Games

We play one game per week on Saturday mornings (except on tournament weekends). Game times may vary from week to week. Be prompt with game starting times. It is especially important to get the first games started on time since a late start pushes everyone back. We only have 15 minutes between games, so it's important to clear out the team area promptly at the end of your game so the next team can set up.

Mismatches: If we had perfectly matched teams, every game would end in a tie. Don't bet on this happening! Despite our best efforts, there will be some mismatched games. If this happens remember Summer priority #1: It's all about fun and developing skills, not about winning! If you're on the winning side of a mismatched game, and you are ahead by three points it is your responsibility to take steps to minimize the winning margin. There is no reason to demoralize the other team. For example, have your team shoot only left footed or tell your players everyone on the team must touch the ball before a shot is made. If the lead becomes five points, the lower scoring team may put an additional player on the field in any position except goalkeeper. If the lead becomes seven points, try mixing up the teams.

Not enough players: One common summer issue is short rosters due to vacations or other soccer tournaments, such as the Lobster tournament in August. If one team is shorthanded, it is standard practice for the more complete team to offer a few players to help even the rosters. In many cases this is the difference between playing and not playing at all. Please be a good sport and don't offer your least skilled or fit players! Most players prefer to play on their own team, so we suggest trading different players for each half. If players balk, point out that this will give everybody on your team, including them, more playing time when there are fewer subs on the larger team. If both teams are shorthanded, simply play a "-1" format. U10 can play 5 v 5 instead of 6 v 6. U12 can play 6 v 6 or 7 v 7 instead of 8 v 8. You may also "recruit" players within the same age group if they are willing to play. These players MUST be registered summer players – no "friends"!

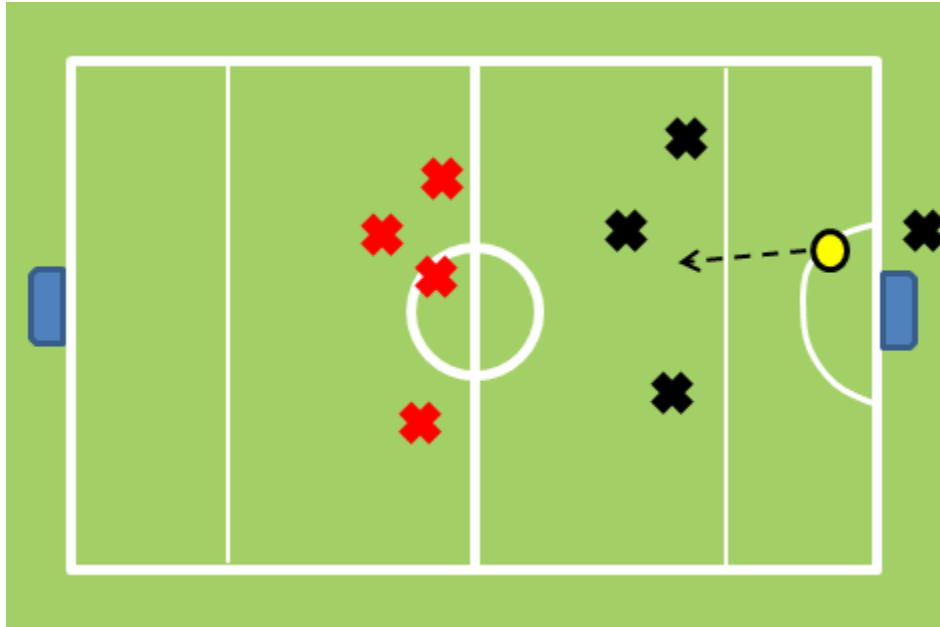
Summer Heat: On extremely hot days you should play quarters instead of halves, with a 2 minute water break about halfway through each half. This doesn't need to be exactly by the clock but will take place at a natural break such as a throw in or goal kick. The game will resume with the completion of the play in progress and will not be a kickoff restart like half-time.

U6 and U8 Small Sided Play: Each year, some parents question why there are no goalies in the U6 and U8 program. As a general rule, ASA follows the recommendations of US Youth Soccer and Massachusetts Youth Soccer. Small sided play is supported by the findings of numerous youth sports studies around the world that show that the small sided games are more effective in developing skills more quickly and appropriate for each age group. There is a link in the addendum to download the US Youth Soccer small sided games manual if one of the parents would like a detailed explanation. For practical reasons we use Pug nets in lieu of permanent goals for U6/U8.

Game Format: The summer game rules are consistent with the published rules of Massachusetts Youth Soccer for the respective age groups with a few exceptions. The most notable of these exceptions are noted below. ASA reserves the right to modify certain aspects of the game format depending on team roster sizes and other variable conditions.

U6 and U8 – 4 v 4; Size 3 ball; kick restart on sideline out of bounds, no goalkeeper. In U6, one coach from each team will be allowed on the field for instructional purposes during game play. They may help encourage and position players but may not play the ball. U8 and older coaches must remain on the sideline. A new rule was introduced during the 2013 season:

For all U6 and U8 games, modify the Goal Kick restarts as follows: The defending team will be positioned behind the half line until the goal kick is taken, then may advance beyond the line. Referees will allow the ball to be placed anywhere on or within the arc for the kick. Referees for U8 games only may be instructed to direct teams to place the ball at the intersection of the arc and the end line for the kick. Diagram of restart position:



U10 – 6 v 6; size 4 ball; throw-ins, goalkeeper; no offside violations will be called in this age group. This has proven to be a difficult concept for the part-time recreational player and is also a difficult call for young referees to make correctly.

U12 – 8 v 8; size 4 ball; throw-ins, goalkeeper; offside violations will be enforced in this age group.

U14 and U16 – 9 v 9 or 11 v 11; size 5 ball; throw-ins, goalkeeper; offside violations will be enforced in this age group.

Playing Time: It is ASA's policy that Summer players be afforded the opportunity to equal playing time for every game.

Zero Tolerance Policy: We strictly adhere to Essex County Youth Soccer Association's rules of conduct for players, coaches and bystanders at games. The policy reads: *"It is the responsibility of **ALL** coaches to maintain the highest standards of conduct for themselves, their players and supporters in all matches. Abusive and obscene language, violent play, violent conduct, fighting and other behavior detrimental to the game will not be tolerated. A coach's responsibility for referee support and spectator control includes the times prior to, during and after the game at the field and surrounding areas. All persons responsible for a team and all the spectators shall support the referee. Failure to do so will undermine the referee's authority and has the potential of creating a hostile environment for the players, the referee and all the other participants and spectators. Consequently, ECYSA has adopted the following rule: **No one is to address the referee during the game!!"***

5. Teaching the Game of Soccer

The wealth of soccer knowledge is vast and sometimes hard to navigate. We as coaches are often overwhelmed by (or unaware of) proper teaching methods of appropriate material to our young players. More information can be found through the sources listed in the appendices, or contact your Director of Coaching (DOC) for more information. It is very important that your players have a fundamental understanding of their roles on the field! Take time to learn and explain them to the best of your ability.

As coaches it is important that we allow our players to simply play the game! Over-coaching is equal to (or worse) than under-coaching. Let the game be the primary teacher. **This is especially true at games.** Speak less, take notes if you see something you want to talk about later, and let them play. This is especially true during games. When you want to introduce instruction during an activity do so in the natural stoppages of the activity, like when the ball goes out of play.

Remember to keep instructions short, detailed and topical (30 seconds MAXIMUM for your coaching point). Paint a clear picture of what you want your players to do by reviewing what occurred during the run of play, rehearse the situation so your players gain success with what you are teaching them and then restart play using what you rehearsed with your players.

6. Running a Successful Practice

No laps, no lines, no lectures! Keep the session simple and player centered. In fact, you will have a single topic that you will focus on for each session! Give the players simple problem solving opportunities and plenty of opportunities to score goals. It is also important to be positive and to continue to create repeated opportunities for the players to express themselves through their ability with the ball, regardless of the outcome of their effort.

Practice Checklist:

- Come to the field with your Practice Plan, and set up your cones before the players arrive.
- Check the field for safety once arriving. Make sure the goals are secure and will not blow over. Look for dangerous holes in the ground, and make sure there are no dangerous objects on the field.
- Teach your players to get into an activity (such as ball tag) that they immediately begin playing when arriving at the field. It is recommended that you do not encourage players to shoot on goal as a pre-practice activity, as this can lead to injury and the reinforcement of bad habits.
- Always finish your practices with a scrimmage.
- At the end of practice check for injuries, make sure everyone knows when next practice or game is and where it will be held, and make sure that every player has a ride home - **do not leave field until all players are picked up!**

7. Guidelines for Using the Practice Plans

For each session plan there is a **single** main concept or area of focus to be covered in the session. For the session topic we have identified three to five main “Coaching Points” for each activity for coaches to reinforce throughout the session. Focus on these and do not stray from the topic. For instance, fight the urge to coach defense while focusing on dribbling skills, and vice-versa. This is harder than it sounds.

Sequence and Progression: The training sessions generally progress from smaller to larger groups of players. All practices should finish with a scrimmage.

Identify the Target Duration of the Activity: Our practices for the Summer League season are 60 minutes long. A typical session will run as follows:

- Warm-Up Activity, 10 minutes
- Activity 1 (Technique Focus), 15 minutes, Small Sided Activity
- Activity 2 (Tactics Focus), 15 minutes, Expanded Small Sided Activity
- Scrimmage, 20 minutes

Include water breaks between each activity and use the breaks to reinforce coaching points and/or adjust the setup of the field to accommodate the next activity. Be flexible! If the players are having fun and the activity is humming along – extend it.

Diagram of the Activity: The diagram is a guide for setting up the practice field, and some general rules and coaching points for each activity. If you want to make adjustments to better suit the age and /or ability of your players feel free to do so!

Rules: Use variations of the stated rules in your small-sided games to adapt the practices to the coaching points and to the characteristics of the players, or to make the exercises age-appropriate. Be creative!

8. The Attributes of a Good Soccer Coach

- Recognizes that the game is the best teacher.
- Places the safety and well-being of players ahead of all other concerns.
- Abides by the principles of fair-play, and reinforces the principles and intent of the Laws of the Game.
- Is supportive of all players, and emphasizes positive over negative teaching methods.
- Has a healthy and comfortable rapport with players and their parents/guardians.
- Has an awareness of age-appropriate activities, and recognizes individual player limitations.
- Is eager to develop personal coaching skills and knowledge of the game, and participates in coaching development programs.
- Can demonstrate proper technique and can teach proper tactics.

What I hear I forget,

What I hear and see I remember a little;

What I hear, see and ask questions about or discuss with someone else, I begin to understand;

What I hear, see, discuss and do, I acquire knowledge and skill;

What I teach to another, I master.

- Adapted from the Chinese Philosopher Confucius