

# Massachusetts Youth Soccer Coach's Code of Conduct

Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, Inc. (Mass Youth Soccer) and its Member Organizations (our Town Programs, Clubs, and Leagues) are committed to promoting the highest levels of respect and consideration in the conduct of all participants (coaches, players, spectators, and referees) during matches at all levels. We want to ensure that matches are fair, positive, and enjoyable experiences for all of the children and adults involved. A soccer match should be friendly and unifying - a spirited social and athletic occasion for all. All coaches must conform to this code of conduct at all times.

## **COACH'S CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **BE SUPPORTIVE**

1. Act as a positive role model for players, both on and off the field, by demonstrating dignity, patience, and a positive spirit at all times.
2. Introduce yourself to the opposing coaches and to the referee/official(s) before a match.
3. Make sure you and all adults on the player's sideline have completed all required registration requirements and are wearing their Mass Youth Soccer Adult Credential.
4. Coaches are responsible for the sportsmanship of their players. If a player is disrespectful, irresponsible, or overly aggressive, remove the player from the match or practice. If appropriate, the player may rejoin the activity after a cooling off period.
5. Acknowledge good sportsmanship when it's displayed.
6. Support the game officials even if you are not sure the call is correct.
  - Your support is essential to the proper play of the game and to the development of players and referees. Failure to do so, especially by coaches, undermines the authority of the officials, sets a bad example for all and can rapidly escalate into a hostile game environment which is inconsistent with the goals of all involved.

### **DO NOT DISTRACT**

7. During matches and practices, you are responsible for the conduct of the parents/guardians of your players and other spectators rooting for your team. It is your responsibility to explain to them acceptable player and parent/spectator behavior in a preseason meeting. Refer to our Parents/Guardians/Spectators and Players' Codes of Conduct.
  - Before the season, send out the Parents/Guardians/Spectators and Players Code of Conduct and make sure they are aware of Mass Youth Soccer Spectator Policies and US Soccer Policy 531-9 addressing misconduct towards the referee. At matches, encourage all parents/guardians/spectators from both teams to applaud and cheer for good plays by both teams. Discourage them from yelling at players. and the referee/match officials.
8. All communications with the referee and match officials must be courteous and professional. It is a coach's responsibility to know what interactions may be classified as dissent, gross misconduct or abuse towards an official.
9. Coaches should not enter the field unless instructed to do so by the referee.
10. If there is an emergency safety concern, alert the Match Officials immediately.  
To report an allegation of misconduct to the referee, wait for the ball to leave

play and calmly address the referee by stating "Referee, Inappropriate Incident Report" it must warrant the communication; refer to U.S. Soccer's 531-9 policy.

11. Do not address the opposing team's players at any time.
12. If you have a complaint, report it to the appropriate League or competition authority. Your observations will be taken seriously if they are presented objectively, factually, and formally.
13. Demand a sports environment that is free from drugs, alcohol and tobacco and refrain from their use at all matches, exhibitions, practices, and events.
14. Never coach a match or conduct a practice under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## **HOSTILITY IS FORBIDDEN - CREATE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

15. Never use profanity, discriminatory language, or make obscene gestures, or engage in any inappropriate behavior or conduct, at any time.
16. Coaches must never use physical punishment or throw objects at players. Any action that could harm a player is strictly forbidden, regardless of performance.
17. **Understand and act upon** code of conduct violations and know your responsibilities for reporting all such violations and other types of misconduct.
18. Review your organization's Emergency Action Plan (EAP). In the event of an injury or unsafe conditions, the coach is responsible for executing the plan.

Coaches who don't follow the expectations described above will be disciplined or removed. Any sanctions will be in line with all applicable misconduct policies. The main reference for sanctions can be found in the Reporting, Response, and Resolution Matrices document. Additionally, violations for misconduct toward a referee will be addressed in accordance with US Soccer's 531-9 policy and penalty matrix, which is specifically used for these types of misconduct violations.

Mass Youth Soccer stresses two points: Officials (Referees, Assistant Referees, and 4th Officials - especially young and inexperienced ones - are like your players and yourself, in that they need time to develop. You play an important role in helping them to improve by letting them concentrate on the match. You can help by encouraging them to be their best and by accepting their inevitable and occasional mistakes. Your role as a coach is to concentrate on your players' enjoyment of the sport and their overall, long-term development, and to support the officials. Use self-regulation to monitor your behavior at all times! When you follow these expectations, the spirit of the sport of soccer will be alive and well in Massachusetts and will grow, along with the enjoyment of all.

## **Coach's Responsibilities**

In addition to the Coach's Code of Conduct, the following Coach Responsibilities should be followed during every youth soccer related activity:

- Understand and accept that coaching is a position of trust.
- Create a player centered environment where players are free to make autonomous decisions.
- Remember that players are involved for fun and enjoyment and you should strive to create a positive soccer environment that reflects why they play.
- Understand that as a youth coach, the match is for the children, not the adults.
- Consistently have a positive attitude and praise players for their efforts and playing fair

regardless of the outcome of the match.

- Never criticize or yell at any player on your team for making a mistake nor address an opposing player in a derogatory manner.
- De-escalate any physical or verbal abuse in youth sports.
- Understand that winning is a consideration, but not the only one, nor the most important one.
- Place the well-being and growth of every player above your personal desire to win.
- Understand that being a coach means being, first and foremost, a role model.
- Create a safe, fun and inclusive environment that provides opportunities for all your players, the capacity to improve their skills, gain confidence and develop self-esteem.
- Create co-constructed team and individual goals. Know and understand your soccer organization's playing time guidelines and give every player an opportunity to play as much as possible. Mass Youth Soccer recommends players should be given the opportunity to play 50% of every game regardless of ability, score or competition within the season.
- Remind the players about the co-constructed goals and objectives for the team, as well as the rules of the match and the policies of your soccer organization, whenever requested or necessary to the best of your ability.
- Inspect all equipment and fields on a regular basis to ensure the safety of players, paying special attention to the security of goal frames.
- If a parent or spectator has a concern about something during a game, you should have a communication plan in place to handle it without disrupting the game.