



The Educated Parent

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FORWARD

BC Soccer strives to provide a healthy and active lifestyle through its Grassroots programming.

The Grassroots programming focuses on fun and avoids emphasizing any form of winning. Every child is guaranteed playing time and the game is taught while players develop in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere.

BC Soccer is ranked third in participation numbers in Canada. It is our goal to increase participation levels by retaining players and driving additional players into soccer via the Grassroots Programming.

The BC Soccer mission and vision are;

Mission: "Developing the game by inspiring British Columbians to lifelong active, inclusive and team play."

Vision: "Canada's foremost integrated soccer development system built upon club, school, varsity and professional team excellence."

Our outcomes: Active Play: (promoting lifelong physical activity and healthy living by British Columbians)

Inclusive Play: (promoting respect and harmony through access to soccer by boys and girls, men and women, and all people regardless of origin, age, and walk of life)

Team Play: (promoting collaboration, cooperation, and coordination in pursuit of excellence in soccer and all aspects of life)

THE EDUCATED PARENT

INTRODUCTION

The Educated Parent document has been designed to assist parents support their children's needs in the development in the game.

A Small Sided Game is any game played with less than eleven players per side.

Eleven-a-side soccer is an adult game devised by and for adults to enjoy.

Small Sided Games are designed and developed to create and provide guidance to parents who have children playing the game of soccer. It is to supply parents the knowledge that will allow the players to grow without placing unnecessary limitations on the children.

In British Columbia, Under 5 to and including Under 12, play Small Sided Games.

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Ok, you have signed your child up for soccer! Now what do you do?

1. You know little to nothing about the game.
2. You know it's the most popular sport by participation numbers and you know kids love playing.
3. You know that the kids are asked to kick a round ball.

The most important thing parents need to know is that soccer is about children having fun!

It's Simple – Your Children LOVE Soccer because it is FUN!

One – from a very early age babies play with soft round balls. Whether it looks like a soccer ball, a volley ball or a basket ball, it is round and it rolls. This is FUN.

Two - Soccer is just that, playing with a ball that rolls. The exception is we have teammates and we have a few simple rules. This is FUN.

Three - Rules are very basic:

The ball must be shared with your teammates

The ball must be kept away from your opponents

All players must respect each other

All players have the opportunity to play with the ball

Everyone has FUN

BASIC SOCCER EQUIPMENT FOR THE PARENT

A comfortable lawn chair is mandatory – it is important that you have a comfortable lawn chair because you are going to be spending the whole game sitting in that chair watching your child have FUN!

Appropriate clothing – in Vancouver, the Lower Mainland and on the Island you need a raincoat! In the North and the Interior you need sun block and loads of drinking water!

In British Columbia you will be watching the beautiful game in the sun, the rain, the heat and the cold, but you will have FUN!

From the social side, you need to mix well with others and be willing to support the coach.

BE A SUPPORTIVE SOCCER PARENT

OK, so your child is a “player” how can you be a supportive soccer parent?

Children like to be encouraged. Encourage and support your child.

Whether they have had success during their game or whether they did not, regardless of the level of skill or time on the field, support your child.

Advise your child of the importance of respect for coaches through interactive discussions with them.

Advise them of the critical nature of contributing to the team and its overall success.

Work in a role model format; let them see the whole picture and support all programs and all players.

Leave the coaching to the coaches and do not criticize the coach.

Avoid adding pressure on children regarding playing time and performance.

Why do children choose soccer?

- To have lots of fun
- To make new friends
- To retain current friendships
- To learn a sport
- To get better
- To increase self esteem
- To wear the kit
- To be part of a team

Some Guidelines for Moms and Dads

Cheer and encourage

Relax and let the kids play

If you yell directions you will create uncomfortable distractions

Remember, you signed them up to have FUN

Live within your child's expectations

Have open discussions with the Coaches

What would make my child quit?

Parents' criticism and yelling

Not getting sufficient playing time

Emphasis on winning

Poor communication

Fear of making mistakes

Boring training sessions

Poor coaching

SENDING-OFF OFFENSIVES FOR PARENTS

Living a past dream - parents who continually live personal achievements through their children have not released their child to the game.

Over concerned - If a parent tends to share the credit when the child has done well, then potentially, this parent would be a concern as they would see themselves as doing poorly when the child does not do well.

Offering too much advice – when a parent is continually coaching their child when the child probably knows more about the game than the parent does, they have not released the inner youth athlete.

Its just a game - A parent should take note, that if they find themselves nervous before a child's game, if they have difficulty accepting a loss, consistently seeking points of correction or verbally abusing the officials, you are taking the game too seriously – Its just a game, the kids are having FUN!

RELAX

HOW TO BECOME AN EDUCATED PARENT

Ok, so how do you become an Educated Parent?

Ask your child why they want to play soccer!

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**?

How can I help **YOU** to prepare for **YOUR** game?

How can I assist **YOU** to become the best player **YOU** can be?

Tell **THEM** that **YOU** are proud of **THEM**

Ok, so you have asked the questions, now listen to the answers they have given you. Understand their answers and respect them regardless whether they are the answers you wanted to hear.

Now you are in a position to mould your support to meet their expressed desires and needs.

Assist them to make their dreams come true.

Then do a self test, and pose the question to yourself – “What can I do to assist my child in being successful in meeting their goals and aspirations for soccer participation?”

Emotional Needs of Youth Players

Children have four basic emotional needs in organized sports:

To play soccer with no pressure imposed by parents.

We are children, children make mistakes, treat us like children and help us correct our mistakes.

Seeing adult role models in action ensures participation is fun.

To play because I love the game, not because maybe one day I may be a professional player or possibly secure a scholarship through soccer.

Being an educated parent

Regardless of your child's degree of success or level of skill or lack of, you must encourage your child.

In the student athlete's life, encouraging participation in a cross section of sports and activities while placing academics first and ensuring a balance.

Emphasize enjoyment of development, of learning new skills, meeting new friends and always having FUN!

Leave coach to coach and avoid placing too much pressure on your child about playing time and their performance.

Remember children will always look to the sideline for recognition. Respond by smiling, giving the thumbs up, and acting responsibly. You are their role model.

WHAT TO EXPECT

There is a great variance in the physical and emotional development of children due to age, gender and maturity.

Soccer is “the kid’s game for all kids” This will mean that there will be all types of kids playing together.

In our Province most teams and clubs are based on volunteer directed programs. They are conducted and controlled by parents who fill the roles of coach, administrator, board member or president. Loosely speaking, these people will only be involved for only a few years while their own children are participating.

90% of volunteer directed youth sports are coached by parents with a child on the team.

Women coaches in our Province add up to only 10% of the Under 6 to Under 13 age groups. Less than 10% of the volunteer coaches in the Province have any type of coaching certification or formal soccer education.

Young players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.

Somebody will come off the field with the need to visit the washroom.

Any external attraction (like a kite, flock of birds etc) will attract 99% of the players' attention.

Some players are so proud to be affiliated with a team or club, they will wear their uniform to bed, to school, to shopping with mom and everywhere else.

A player on the bench will forget to pay attention to the action on the field and sometimes will require a reminder that it's their turn to play.

Players will still stop playing and laugh if the referee gets hit in the butt with the ball during a game – they are not playing to win, they are playing to have fun.

If you drive someone else's child to practice or the game, he or she may not remember to look for you after the event to get home.

What do players need?

A supportive and enthusiastic parents.

Each player must have his or her own age-appropriate ball.

Shin pads are mandatory from a safety point of view, our children must be safe. These must be worn for all practices and games.

Soccer boots that match with the playing surface are needed. If they are playing indoors, indoor soccer shoes should be worn.

A water bottle with the players name written on it full of fresh water should be available to your child at each practice and game.

At most clubs, if not all, your child will be supplied with a jersey, shorts and socks.

PRACTICE SESSIONS

The “practice” session

The warm-up prepares the players for training; it sets the tone for a fun filled practice.

The warm-up prepares the mind and body for the upcoming physical activities.

Debate continues as to whether young players need to stretch, however we recommend stretching to help encourage good habits for the future.

The warm-up should be “ball-driven” using a ball encourages players to use a lot of touches and forces dribbling, this will develop technical skill.

Activities must be appropriate for the skills and ages of the players.

The coach should conduct a number of short and varying activities; these may or may not be representative of a soccer game.

Fun activities could be in forms of:

- Individual
- Small groupings
- Large groupings
- Team

The coach will rotate and change activities regularly as children’s attention span is limited.

THE SMALL SIDED GAME

The Small Sided Game is designed to foster player development and familiarize the children with the different challenges they will experience as they progress to the larger game format.

Children want to play and have fun playing.

Small Sided Games (e.g. 3 v 3 or 4 v 4) to helps to keep everyone involved and all developing.

Activities are organized to progress into controlled scrimmages and then into an open scrimmage.

Remember, the kids signed up to play soccer!

TEACHING SPORTSMANSHIP

The following aspects will teach and foster the fundamentals of good sportsmanship. Share these with your child and other interested persons.

- Cheer and encourage all the children, even those on the other team. You will be surprised what difference it can make on the sidelines when parents make an effort to applaud a good effort or good play no matter who makes it.
- Talk to parents of the other team. They are not the enemy; they are there for the children too.
- Be a parent, not a coach: resist the urge to critique. Children dread parents pointing out all their mistakes. Sometimes just being there shows your children what being a good parent is all about.
- Leave the coaching to the coaches. This includes motivating, psyching your child for practice, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc.

Thank the officials - find a few moments to thank the officials for their hard work after a game, especially if your child's team loses. You will be rewarded with the pleasure of seeing a surprised smile in return.

Keep soccer in its proper perspective:

Soccer should not be larger than life for you. If your child's performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Remember your relationship will continue with your children long after their youth soccer days are over.

Keep your goals and needs separate from your child's experience.

GAME DAY

Sideline Actions

Children want to be applauded for their success

Children do not want adults yelling instructions.

Think of the soccer field as a fun playground and not as a championship arena.

Focus on the process of developing while playing and not the result.

Parents should refrain from consuming alcohol at the field including the social drink in the car park prior to the game. In the event of such actions happening, the club, team or official has the right to ask the offender to leave or be removed from the venue.

Friends NOT Enemies

Unlike the adult game, children playing soccer do not see the other team as the enemy. Unless this has been reinforced by the adults.

The other team may consist of their school friends or neighbors in the community. There is a very good possibility that they may be playing together in your backyard after the game having a hot-chocolate with you.

Cheer ANY and ALL success on the field. It DOES NOT matter what player OR what team.

They are all kids and they want you there to see them play.

Children Don't Care Who Wins

Don't keep score, the kids don't regard it as important.

Don't care who wins or loses, the children are having fun and that is the objective NOT winning or losing.

"Youth sport provides an ideal avenue for early exposure to setbacks; it allows supportive parents and adults to offer guidance with the stakes not nearly being as high as they will be sometimes later on in life."

Going home after the game

Don't reward what you perceive as success.

Don't punish what you perceive as failure.

Don't evaluate your child's performance, he or she is playing to have fun. Playing youth soccer is NOT a test; there are no failures only developing soccer players.

Meet your child's needs by remembering the questions you asked and the answers you got as to why your child is playing soccer.

Questions on the way home after the game

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

Did you have fun today?

What did you think you did well today?

Where you able to use your new moves that you learnt in practice?

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

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE COACH

Let the coach, coach.

Ask the coach for his coaching philosophy, the team rules and guidelines.

Don't ask questions during a game or during practices.

Arrange an appointment with the coach if you have any concerns or questions.

Ask the coach how you can help, during practice and games but don't be offended if he/she declines your assistance.

Be supportive, always be a role model with positive behavior and support the program.

CONFLICTING AGENDAS

Reasons children play soccer and coaches coach soccer must match, some items below would be regarded as conflicting. It is important that the player, coach and parents are on the same page.

Why are the children playing?

- to have fun
- friends are playing
- to satisfy mom and dad
- time away from mom and dad
- get into shape

Why is the coach, coaching?

- their child is playing
- wants to be in charge
- wants to see players develop
- wants to show the players all the skills they have learned over their career
- because they enjoy and have fun with the kids
- to give back to the game
- to win the championship

THE OFFICIAL

Not everyone sees the play exactly the same.

The main objective of the referee is to make the game is played in a safe environment and manor for the children.

Being the person officiating a game is not as easy as it appears.

Remember, many officials are fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of soccer players, or are soccer players themselves. Many other officials are fellow parents just trying to help youth soccer players develop.

It is important to recognize that the referee is doing his/her best. They may see something that you did not see or may be not what you wanted them to see.

Let the Official blow the game!

Official deserve respect and need to be given sufficient support.

Helping the official to call a foul only confuses children.

Disagreeing with the calls, only hinders your child's respect for the referee and may hurt the view of the referee towards your child's team.

Criticism causes officials to quit rather than become better.

Many officials quit due to being yelled at by parents.

Don't be embarrassed to thank and cheer the official.

The goal is to let the game be played so that children can develop and have fun.

RESOURCES AND CREDITS

BC Soccer www.bcsoccer.net

Canadian Soccer Association www.canadasoccer.com

National Coaches Association of Canada www.coach.ca

The Football Association www.thefa.com

United States Youth Soccer Association www.usyouthsoccer.org