

Crew Juniors

Expectations Parents, Players, and Coaches



As we prepare to start this soccer adventure together there are a few things we would like to discuss with all of you. Please take a few minutes to read through this letter, as it will help each of us (coaches, players and parents) to get the most out of the coming season. We also encourage you to review these ideas from time to time during this season and the coming years. Keep in mind that each coach and each team is a little different and your coach may have some slight variations to these expectations.

Coaches' Expectations of the Players

We will spend a lot of time during this season talking to the players about our expectations of them on and off the field. While we will obviously spend a lot of time working on ball skills and tactical understanding over the coming months, it is also very important to me that at the end of this year each player has learned to take pride in how they compete and how they treat those around them. Along these lines, here are a few of the things that we will ask the players to do throughout the year:

- Shake the hand of each opponent after the game and tell him/her "good game".
- Shake the hand of each referee after the game and tell him/her "thank you".
- Offer to help the coach pick up training gear after each practice
- Always check for trash when leaving a game or practice
- Be responsible for his/her own equipment ("my dad forgot my cleats" will not cut it!)
- Never kick a ball into a crowd of people or towards a person who is not expecting it
- Offer to help a player up, if you've fouled him/her or otherwise knocked him/her to the ground

Coaches' Expectations of the Parents

There are also a number of expectations we have of the parents that will help us to have a successful year with these players. Here is a list of some of these expectations with brief explanations:

Watch trainings from a distance. This time is for the coaching staff to work with the players and for them to enjoy their time with each other. Please don't interact with the players during trainings any more than you would while they are sitting in their classroom at school. This includes cheering and standing/sitting alongside the training field.

During games, only give supportive comments after the play. We will take a minute to explain why it is so important that parents do not coach from the sidelines. We spend hundreds of hours at practice during the year. Some of this time is spent developing technical skills such as trapping, dribbling, and ball striking. However, we also spend a lot of time developing decision making skills (when to trap, when to dribble, when to shoot, when to cross, when to pressure, when to tackle, when to mark tight, when to delay). That is perhaps the most important skill that young players will develop. The best dribbler who dribbles at the wrong time can be terribly ineffective. Similarly, someone who is great at trapping a ball and continually traps the ball in front of our own goal, when there are two opponents right in front of him/her can be detrimental to a team.

This is why we spend so much time working on field awareness and decision making. One of the most effective ways to develop good decision making is to allow players to make decisions on their own without fear of reprimand. If a player relies on a coach to yell at him/her when to should shoot, for example, then the player never gets to practice making this decision himself/herself. So when this player goes on to try out for an ODP team, a high school team, or just to play in a pick-up game and there is no coach telling him/her when to shoot, the player is lost. The player may dribble until the ball is taken away or may pass the ball when he/she clearly should have shot. It is largely through a player's soccer education and practical application that he/she learns when to effectively shoot, pass, clear, dribble, trap, shield, delay, tackle, etc. When the player decides what to do (dribble, let's say) he/she still needs to decide what dribbling technique to use, where to dribble towards, and what to do next. Of course, we work with the

players at length during games and practices to understand what factors should be weighed in making decisions. But ultimately, it is the player's decision to make.

During any game, each player will make many of these decisions. Will they make some poor decisions? OF COURSE! But hopefully they will understand why it was poor and what would have been better and make fewer poor decisions in the next game. More importantly, we hope the bad decisions they make will be less costly and the good decisions they make will be more effective in the next game. Any decision is better than no decision.

While we try hard to create an environment where players can make their own decisions without the fear of making mistakes, this can be shattered very quickly if the players hear a constant stream of commands from the spectator sideline. It is understandable that we all get caught up in the moment of the game and want to help the players to do better. However, shouting instructions from the sideline is not the best way to do this. To help your players improve in the game of soccer please focus your energy on being supportive and encouraging players to watch high level soccer games, read about the game and to spend more time practicing on their own. We understand that giving players explicit instructions during a game may help to win that particular game. In some important games you will hear coaches giving a lot of instruction. However, our primary intent is to help the players to reach a much higher level of play. A large part of that is developing smart players that make good decisions. One thing our coaching staff has come to realize is that winning one particular game is not worth sacrificing the development of our players. In some games the coaches will be very instructive and in other games we may just evaluate how the players do without much instruction. However, we can't do this type of evaluation if the players are receiving instruction from the spectator sideline.

Here are some examples of inappropriate comments:

- Go to the ball.
- Shoot.
- Talk.
- Push up.
- Negative comments toward our opponents, their parents or the officials are never appropriate.

Examples of appropriate comments:

- Nice shot!
- Good effort!
- Great run!
- Let's go gold!

Avoid lectures. Some soccer parents with good intentions give a 30 minute lecture, covering all the player's supposed deficiencies and giving playing advice, in the car on the way to each match. The kids arrive far off their optimal mental state, dreading the critique they are likely to hear, whether they want it or not, on the way home. Kids who are massaged in this way tend to not play badly, they just tend to not play, possibly to avoid making mistakes. For the best results, parents should memorize and use the following:

Before the match:

1. I LOVE YOU.
2. GOOD LUCK.
3. HAVE FUN.

After the match:

1. I LOVE YOU.
2. IT WAS GREAT TO SEE YOU PLAY.
3. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EAT?

Avoid rewards and punishments. Please avoid rewarding players for certain types of play. Paying your child for every goal he/she scores can lead to poor decision making on the field (i.e. shooting when a pass was the better choice). Also avoid punishments, such as grounding a player who doesn't score or a player who receives a yellow card. Players grow much faster when they aren't scared of making a bad decision.

Help teach good nutrition. Coaches will often speak with the players about what they should be eating before and after games and practices. Many younger players rely on their parents to cook for them or to buy them meals. If a coach has told the players to eat a light lunch of fruits and grains, then please don't go to Wendy's for lunch! Likewise, players need to have enough cool water to stay hydrated during games and practices. This means an insulated water jug with *some* ice. On a hot day, a 20 oz. Aquafina bottle will often be finished within 30 minutes. If not, it will probably be too hot to drink.

Understand coaching styles. Each coach has a very different style of working with players. During games, some coaches will be very vocal, giving constant instruction and feedback to the players on the field. Other coaches will spend most of their time talking to individual players when they are subbed off the field. Furthermore, some coaches use games as a time to evaluate the progress the players are making and to come up with a plan for the next few practices. Please understand that, while the coach might be quiet during some games, this does not mean that we're not paying very close attention to what players are doing.

Understand playing time. In most games (about 75%) players should expect to play at least 30% of the game. The other 25% of the games, the coach will distribute playing time based on players' effectiveness in that particular game. This is a rough average and will change a little based on the age of the team and level that the team is competing at.

Understand that different coaches will work with your player. Crew Juniors has one of the most knowledgeable and experienced coaching staffs in the region. Our coaching staff consists of professional coaches with considerable coaching and playing experience. Your child's head coach will be at most of the games and practices for the team. However, other staff coaches will regularly run trainings or games as well. There may also be one or two occasions that no coach is available and we ask a parent to run part of a practice or game. Please understand that it's good for the players to have a different coach give them a slightly different perspective on the game from time to time.

Understand guest playing

As an organization, we strongly encourage coaches to utilize guest players often. Having different players join a team for practice can help to challenge a player that has been doing well. It can also help to get a player some extra time on the ball if they may have missed part of the season due to injury or perhaps just joined late. Likewise, a team that has low numbers may wish to bring in a few players to help the coach run activities that require a specific number of players. Coaches will often use guest playing in games for some of these very same reasons.

Understand that our commitment to each family in the club is for their primary team. When guest playing opportunities arise, it is important to understand that this is a bonus for the players getting the opportunity and should not be an expectation of any player in the program.

As you can imagine, there are many, many factors that go into determining which players will get these opportunities. Rest assured that both coaches are weighing all these factors and working together to determine what is best for both teams and all the players involved. As mentioned, we do ask coaches to provide guest playing opportunities as much as possible and as much as will help the players and teams involved. However, it is not reasonable to expect the coaches to take the time to explain this decision each time these opportunities arise.

Contact coaches at appropriate times. We encourage parents to ask the coaches questions about positions, team goals, tactics, training ideas, etc. The best way to do so is by email or phone. On the soccer field coaches usually have a very tight schedule, going from one field to another. Typically, we will not have time for these discussions before, during or after a game or practice. Of course, if you need to tell the coach before a game or practice that your player has an injury or has to leave early (or something of that sort) that is fine.

Enjoy the game! Soccer is a beautiful sport that can teach us a lot about life. Please try your best to support us in our effort to teach the players to become better athletes and respectful competitors! Remember, if the kids aren't having fun, we're missing the whole point of youth sports.