



# Los Alamos Youth Soccer League

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To All Interested Parties;

The board met this week and decided to make some changes to the recreational league. These changes include a rate increase, a hard registration deadline, transfer fees, and a requirement for each team to provide a referee. Before I get into the end results, let me discuss the reasons why we made these changes.

For many years now, the board has been having a very difficult time getting people to help volunteer their services and talents to the league. I received a few emails stating how much they help out, and they are correct. There are many more people besides just the board that help keep this league running. We even have a number of people volunteering that no longer have kids in the league. Unfortunately, not enough volunteers to help the league run smoothly.

We had just over 450 kids registered (Fall and Spring) in our recreational program for the past few years. We have had roughly 30 recreational teams a season. If you figure each team has one assistant coach, we have 60 parents volunteering their time. Trust me, we are ecstatic that they all come out and help. We wish as a league we could do more to show our appreciation, but at the rates we have been charging, we are truly non-profit. Since we had no way to recognize their hard work, we basically took whatever they were willing to give us by way of their time. This often led to our failure to properly train them, poor execution on setting up the season, and poor communication.

Parts of these issues come in the way we handle registrations. Every season, we advertise the registration deadlines and allow time for late registrations. Every year, we seem to fail to get the word out soon enough to allow parents the time to register. For example, this past Fall season, we had 41 kids registered for the season by the registration deadline (July 15). We ended up with just over 300 kids in the rec league in the Fall. I understand that everyone is not thinking soccer and having a great summer break, but the delay in registering makes it impossible for us to plan for equipment purchases, field scheduling, creating teams, finding coaches, etc. We are scrambling with all the above and usually doing a poor job of communicating these issues to all of you. We tried to prevent this by charging a late fee of more than 50% of the cost of registering, but because we have worked so hard to keep costs down, it appears that over 86% of the parents do not find it a great enough deterrent.

At some point (very close to the start of the season) we finally get the numbers to assign players to teams. We have made every attempt to keep kids in the same school on the same team. The rationale is that this is the easiest way to keep friends together. Sometimes we cannot do this because of the number of kids in one school is too great or too few for a single team. We often get requests as well for only Tue/Thr practice. We pass this information on to the volunteer coach, but in the end, it is up to the coach which days fit best for their schedule. This is the most common reason we have parents wanting to transfer from one team to another. Other reasons include not liking the coach, not liking another parent on the team, and not enough challenge for their child. In the past, most of the parents would simply look for a new coach, ask the coach, get the ok from them, and then start bringing their kid to that practice. If one or two kids

did this, we would not have a problem. But the reality is we end up having lots of kids switching, resulting in one team often having way too many players and kids not getting enough playing time, and other teams not having enough to field a full team. To some this results in the appearance that the league is creating stacked teams. It also results in one team often have way too many players and kids not getting enough playing time, and other teams not having enough to field a full team.

I mentioned the scrambling to find coaches earlier. All we can offer at this point is to reimburse the registration costs for the coaches. I understand people have busy schedules. We all do though. What this league is all about is teaching life lessons through soccer. One of the best lessons our kids can learn is seeing their parents volunteer, so that they will one day do the same. I got emails stating that they volunteer to other programs; that is great, but it still does not help run this league. Once we have all the coaches in place, which often takes a lot of begging and hand twisting, we schedule games and fields. Kids are excited, coaches are ready, but no referee shows up. It is not because the league has forgotten about the game. We simply do not have enough refs.

So, on to the changes. Here are the rate changes for the 2010-2011 season.

- U6 - \$65 for both seasons (Fall and Spring) or \$45 for just one.
- U8 and above - \$100 for both seasons and \$75 for just one.
- A hard registration deadline. This Fall it will be July 23.
- Each team will have a licensed referee and officiate 3 games a season (paid) \$50 transfer fee. The coach of the team losing a player and the coach of the team gaining a player will both receive \$20 and the league will receive \$10 for administrative fees. It will also be a requirement that another player from the team gaining a player will have to swap and pay the same fees.

The transfer fee is the only way we figure the league will find out about transfers. Our hope is that the coaches will notify the league and the \$20 is really just an incentive to do the right thing. The administrative fee is because we need to tell our insurance company who plays on what team and the get the paperwork to the coach for each kid. If you transfer teams without the league's knowledge, the players are no longer properly insured in the case of an accident, and the league is liable, and NMYSA's insurance will not pay medical expenses.

We plan on purchasing something every season for the kids (soccer bag, nice water bottle, t-shirt, ball, etc). Coaches training will be purchased and made available to all registered coaches. We primarily hope the rate increase will encourage some to volunteer and seek a refund. We also have a scholarship program. The application is available on the web site. How we hand out those scholarships will probably come under review in the next couple of months. The deadline for registrations will be firm, no exceptions. We understand that this may result in the Fall season being played with 4 teams, but it will address the many complaints the board has been receiving. We will hold a referee's clinic in August; so all teams will have time to find a representative. It does not have to be a parent. Siblings looking to make some money are always welcome. The league is very generous in creating new refs. The referee-in-training will need to pay for the clinic up front, but once they have officiated 3 games with the league, LAYSL will reimburse the clinic fee and buy them a new referee jersey. Did I mention that referees get paid \$20 a game as well?

Unhappy with the new changes? We are still looking for board members. We will be holding elections at the end of the month and you can affect how the league is run. We hope these changes are for the better and we get more volunteers. The alternative is to raise the rates again, and start hiring staff to fill these positions. The positions that are up for election are the Recreational League Coordinators for each town, the Field Coordinator, Referee Coordinator, and my position, the President.