

RECREATIONAL PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Los Alamos Youth Soccer League

(Revised by the Board of Directors October 27, 2003)

Objectives

The purpose of the recreational program of the Los Alamos Youth Soccer League (LAYSL) is to provide an educational, fun environment for developing youth in soccer, and to teach soccer skills, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. The goal is player development, not winning.

Guidelines

These Guidelines provide the framework within which the LAYSL Recreational Program is generally expected to operate. Changes in youth soccer are recommended (and sometimes mandated) by our parent organizations—the New Mexico Youth Soccer Association (NMYSA), US Youth Soccer, and US Soccer—and may alter some of the specifics included below from time to time. These Guidelines may be modified by vote of the LAYSL Board at regularly scheduled meetings.

Organization and Administration

The program is run by volunteers, and supports community teams in youth age groups U19 through U5, for boys and girls. Coed teams are usually formed in age groups U19, U16, U14, U12, U10, U8 and U6, and girls-only teams are formed in age groups U14, U12, and U10 when there are sufficient players and coaches. Girls may choose to play in either division. Some years, demographics may require combination and/or restructuring of age groups. To maximize the soccer experience for players—in particular, to provide a larger number of individual player touches on the ball during games—the program strives to achieve the minimum reasonable team size.

The recreational program is administered by the Board of Directors, the Recreational Program Coordinator, the Recreational Program Registrar, and age-group coordinators. The Board of Directors establishes program policy and guidelines. The LAYSL Director of Coaching and Player Development (DoC) serves as a key resource for the recreational Program, offering coach and player training opportunities and guiding the “curriculum” for age-appropriate player development.

Recreational Program Coordinator

The Recreational Program Coordinator carries out Board policy, selects age-group coordinators, and is responsible for orientations, team formation, game scheduling, field preparation, coordinating and scheduling field times for practices and games for the entire recreational program, organizing post-season tournament/festival play, and distributing a copy of these guidelines to each coach before the start of the fall season or whenever these guidelines are

changed by the Board. The Recreational Program Coordinator may delegate many of the responsibilities to age-group coordinators and other volunteers.

Registration

All players must be properly registered before practicing or playing with a team. The deadlines for fall and spring registrations are approximately July 15 and February 15, respectively, or as set by the Recreational Program Registrar. After the deadline, a late fee is charged. Registrations will continue to be accepted until a late registration cutoff date on a space-available, first-come first-served basis, as determined by the Recreational Program Coordinator and the Recreational Program Registrar. The registration fee is waived for directors of the Board, coaches, and age-group coordinators (on a one-job-to-one-waiver basis). Scholarships are available for hardship cases.

Team Formation

The ideal number of players per team is the number of players on a side in a game (or double this number for U6 and U8 depending on coach availability) plus three. Balancing teams ability-wise in an age group is accomplished by means of a draft usually supervised by the age-group coordinator.

Traditionally, before the draft begins, the coaches, assistant coaches and age-group coordinator discuss the players' skill levels and behavior, and rank them accordingly into at least three categories (for example: above average, average, and below average), using all the available knowledge about the players, including the previous year's rating sheets. At the draft meeting, coaches, taking turns, select players first from the top-rated group, then the next lower group, etc. The children of the coach and the assistant coach (limited to one for purposes of the draft) are automatically on the team, and count as picks in the appropriate skill category. Immediately after finishing drafting, the coaches may trade equal-rated players in an attempt to honor special requests. However, the granting of special requests is not guaranteed.

Other means for assuring balanced team formation may be used. For example, after recruiting a sufficient number of coaches, the age-group coordinators may produce the initial team assignment lists based on player skill level and rating sheet information followed by consideration of special requests as best as possible. Small adjustments concerning players of equivalent skill level would then be made at the coaches' meeting. Regardless of method used, the most important criterion in team formation for benefit of the recreational players is producing balanced teams.

A soccer player is "playing up" when he/she is playing on a team in an older age group than his/her birth date indicates. The Board strongly discourages "playing up" as a general rule in the recreational program, since there are no tryout-based recreational teams (by US Youth Soccer rules). However, players born in August are automatically allowed to "play up" one year so that they may play with their classmates. There may be other situations in which playing up would not be detrimental to the player. A "Play-up Request Form" must be completed as a part of the registration process for any player wishing to play up and the "play up release waiver" on the

NMYSA registration form must be signed. A player cannot be moved once his/her registration has been processed. No child may “play up” more than one birth year and no child may “play down.”

Equipment

The League makes some equipment available for team use. The League issues each coach balls and cones, a goalkeeper shirt (for teams in age groups that use a goalkeeper), a ball pump and needles, etc. Nets, portable goals, and other equipment, are also available.

Each player must have his/her own uniform. All uniforms in the program are the same, with royal blue shirts for one side in a game, and white shirts for the other. The minimum uniform is the correct color shirt (a blue/white reversible shirt, or one blue and one white shirt), shin guards, and a covering over the shin guards (high socks or long pants). Sponsorships of any kind may not be displayed on the uniforms. Shin guards are required—a child may not play in practices or games without them. Soccer shoes are recommended, but not required.

Practices

Practice sessions may not begin before the official start date of the spring or fall recreational season, as determined by the Recreational Program Registrar and the Recreational Program Coordinator, and are limited to two per week with a maximum of 90 minutes per session, except for the U6 and U8 age groups in which the maximum is 60 minutes per session.

Games

The recreational soccer year consists of a fall 6-game season, and a spring 6-game season, each followed by optional tournament or festival playing opportunities. Game schedules may include games with Los Alamos teams opposing White Rock teams, and may include teams from other nearby areas.

There is no official score keeping, no recorded team standings, and no publicity. Players who have attended and participated in practices preceding a game are entitled to playing time equal to one half game, and are to get more playing time than those who have not attended and participated in the practices. A player is expected to play the position assigned, except for the goalkeeper position. No one will be forced to play goalkeeper.

Annual Tournaments

The spring season may be immediately followed by an end-of-season round robin tournament or festival, a "soccer day" for as many teams (or individual players) as possible at one soccer complex. The Recreational Program Coordinator may also invite teams from nearby areas, such as Taos, Santa Fe, and Pojoaque.

For U10 and older age groups, participation in additional optional post-season fall and/or spring tournaments and festivals is encouraged. Whole teams directly from the recreational program

may participate, and/or “select” teams may be formed. A team from an age group may participate in a tournament only if a registered recreational coach or assistant coach from the age group volunteers to coach the team. If there is more than one volunteer to coach the same team, then the Recreational Program Coordinator will choose who will be the coach. For “select” team tournaments, the coach must hold open, well-advertised tryouts for all interested players from Los Alamos and White Rock in the age group.

Coach Responsibilities

Each coach is responsible for providing a safe, challenging, educational, enjoyable soccer experience for his/her team. He/she is expected to behave in an exemplary sportsmanlike manner at all times. Coaches are expected not to run up the score, and if a game becomes too lopsided, to move strong players to defense or out of the game, and/or to trade some players with the opposing team. Coaches shall not coach or instruct players on the field during games, and shall not question the authority of the referee in any manner. A coach may be dismissed, in accordance with the bylaws, for unsportsmanlike conduct. Coaches should encourage their players to learn as much as they can about soccer. One way to do this is for the coach and the team to attend Los Alamos High School soccer games. A coach may dismiss a player from his/her team for disciplinary reasons after he/she has first given an oral warning to the player and his/her parents, and has informed and discussed the situation with the Recreational Program Coordinator.

Each coach is responsible for recruiting parents to be referees and assistant referees (formerly linespersons). Each coach must report at the end of each season (biannually) his/her LAYSL equipment inventory, and must also return completed player rating sheets.

Player Responsibilities

All players are expected to be courteous and encouraging to teammates and coaches, to try their best, and to display good sportsmanship at all times. Each player is expected to be on time for practices and games, to wear the appropriate equipment, and to leave inappropriate equipment at home or in the “off” position (*e.g.*, cell phones). Shin guards are mandatory. If a player cannot attend a practice or game, the player is expected to inform his/her coach in advance. Players are encouraged to attend and learn from Los Alamos High School soccer games.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for obtaining a uniform for their child, for delivering their child to, and picking them up from, practices and games on time, for informing the coach in advance when their child cannot be at a practice or game, and for volunteering to help the team. Parents are expected to give positive, encouraging comments to their children both on and off the field. Parents are to refrain from making any coaching comments or negative statements of any kind during games to players on or off the field. Verbal abuse by parents of referees, coaches, or players, will not be tolerated. Such behavior can result in a red card for the coach, and a request for the offending parent to leave the field. Repeated offenses may result in barring a parent from the soccer field during all games and practices.

In older age groups, each team must provide at least one parent referee, and at least two assistant referees (formerly linespersons), all of whom are required to attend clinics and training sessions. Parents are encouraged to attend Los Alamos High School soccer games with their children to help their children learn and appreciate soccer.

Local Rules and Local Modifications to the Laws of the Game

The Recreational Program adopts the rules of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), with the following exceptions and emphasis.

The following are not allowed: metal cleats, jewelry (including all earrings, friendship bracelets, etc.), hard hair fasteners, and belts.

Each coach is responsible for the conduct of his/her team and its supporters. A coach can be red-carded for unsportsmanlike conduct of a parent or fan.

Because excessive substitutions disrupt the flow of the game, frequent substitutions are discouraged.

Goalkeepers are given extended protection. In addition to the official rulebook definition of possession, the goalkeeper is also considered to have possession of the ball when he/she has the ball trapped or is releasing the ball.

The table below shows for each age group, the ball size, the recommended number of players per side in a game, and the recommended number of minutes per half in a game. If a range of numbers of players per side in a game is indicated below, then the actual number will be determined by the Director of Coaching, the Recreational Program Coordinator, and the Referee Coordinator before the season begins when they set up teams, and will generally be based on the number of coaches available in the age group. The League generally subscribes to the US Youth Soccer emphasis on small-sided matches to enhance touches on the ball and player skill development.

| age group | ball size | # per side | match duration |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| U6 | 3 | 3, no GK | Four 8-min quarters |
| U8 | 3 | 4, no GK | Four 8-min quarters |
| U10 | 4 | 5, no GK | Four 12-min quarters |
| U12 | 4 | 7, with GK (girls 5-7) | Two 25-min halves |
| U14 | 5 | 5-11 | Two 35-min halves |
| U16 | 5 | 5-11 | Two 40-min halves |
| U19 | 5 | 5-11 | Two 45-min halves |

Both teams in a game will have the same number of players on a side. A game (or two simultaneous games) will still be played even if there are too few players to field teams with the

number of players per side recommended above. If one or both teams have fewer players than above, and the teams have approximately the same number of players, then the game (or two simultaneous games) will be played with fewer players per side than above. If one or both teams have fewer players than above, and the teams do not have approximately the same number of players, then the game (or two simultaneous games) will be played after the team with fewer players borrows players from the other team, or after mixing all the players to form approximately equal teams, even if the resulting number of players per side is less than recommended above. Not playing a game (or two simultaneous games) is strongly discouraged.

For U6 and U8 only

Additional local rules are in place for the U6 and U8 age groups covering small-sided games, a simultaneous games format, and similar special arrangements. Please see the latest age-group-specific guidelines for additional details.