

Coach/Parent Guide

Today's coach has to be much more than the word implies. He or she has to be a manager coach.

Without parents there are no players. With a young team and plenty of parents the coach needs a system to keep everyone onside. Disgruntled parents = unhappy players. Unhappy players produce disgruntled parents. It can be a massive challenge.

A guide to getting parents onside

Start the season with some kind of parent's get-together to discuss the team plan. Is the main objective to have fun? Is development of the player more important than winning the game? What does winning and losing mean? What is the role of the parents?

Involve the parents in the running of the team as much as you possibly can. Below is a coach's check list identifying some of the tasks that need attention.

Make sure you have at least one co-coach or assistant. My personal recommendation is to have two. Apart from lessening the chores of the organization of the practices and games, there will be time when everyone in the coaching team is not available.

COACH'S CHECK LIST

1. Identify a Safety Officer (and an assistant in case of absence) to check the practice and game fields for any hazards (glass, pot holes, unsecured goals, etc).
2. Identify a Team Manager for the team administration for things such as player registration, team travel and possible accommodation (tournaments) and communication to parents and players (in conjunction with the coach).
3. Identify an Equipment Manager for acquisition and maintenance of practice equipment, nets, uniforms, soccer balls, etc.
4. Trainer. Who looks after an injured player? Not the coach, I hope. Ideally we should have a current first aid trained person who goes on the field to assess an injury and make the decision as to whether that player should leave the field for treatment. Normally, at younger ages, the incidence of serious injury is rare and the substitution of players is an accepted protocol to give everyone similar playing times. In a competitive U16 team playing in a cup game should the coach be making decisions as to whether a key player should stay on the field?
5. Emergency Person (or two). A procedure needs putting in place in the event of emergency medical treatment being needed. Cell phone. Emergency #911. Address of the field for an ambulance. Access information to the field. Do you have a medical expert or two among the parents (doctor, paramedic, nurse) – see Point #4.
6. Have an agreed protocol in the event of a concussion or suspected concussion (<http://www.sportsconcussions.org/signing-lystedt-law.html>).
7. A list of parents who can double up for any of the roles in case of the absence of any of the key persons (including the coach).
8. All of the above and others that are agreed upon should be put into a Team Operations Manual, circulated and signed off by everyone.

It would also be good if the manual was placed on a team or club website and that the Team Manager always carried a couple of printouts at practices and games.

The coach and team manager should make efforts to have two or three semi-social parent meetings each season to discuss how things are going. As well, try to have an end of season gathering for players, parents and coaches where there is an opportunity to get some feedback and recommendations for the next season if the team is scheduled to stay together.

Remember it is not just about the games. The Operations Manual should cover team practices and the different conditions that operate there.