



Florida Fire Juniors Parent Code of Conduct

Dear Parents:

Since its inception, Florida Fire Juniors has had fewer parent conduct problems than most clubs in the region. The main reason is that we have parents who are civil, supportive, and respectful of the complexities of running a youth sports organization and administering youth sports games. The other reason is that we define appropriate conduct in great detail regarding the right way to do business with our players, coaches, referees and administrators. All parents want to have a good sports experience with their kids and understanding how all involved in the club conduct themselves is critical to our success. Please read and acknowledge the following code of conduct for our parents, and help make this a great season and a great experience for all.

The players

- Parents are expected to encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, game officials, and administrators at all times.
- Parental criticism of other players on the team during games is not acceptable.
- Our coaches emphasize that frequent practice will ultimately determine each player's role on the team. If a player is not satisfied with their role on a team, parents should facilitate a more aggressive practice schedule. It's completely appropriate to meet with a coach to discuss what a player needs to do to improve, but it's important to bring the player to the meeting as they are the one that needs to hear it. Almost all parent/coach meetings end with a discussion about practicing more.
- Parents must make every effort to get their son/daughter to practices and games on time. If they cannot, they must contact the coach or team manager. Failure to attend practice may have an impact on playing time.
- Parents are not permitted to enter the field of play during a game. If a player is injured, the coach will attend to the player. This is a difficult rule for parents of younger players to follow, but it is part of the league's rules.
- As parents, we must remember that the game is for the players, not for the adults. As passionate as we adults may be about their games, *this is their time, not ours.*

Game Day Conduct

- Parents must be sensitive that the other team's parents are also watching the game. Occasionally parents make comments that could be perceived as derogatory toward the other team's players. That's the number one cause of sideline conflicts. How parents conduct themselves on the sidelines sets an example for the players and is a large part of the Club reputation we all want to build and protect.
- Parents may not use alcohol, illegal drugs and unauthorized prescription drugs shall not be possessed, consumed or distributed before, during or after any game or at any other time at the field and/or game complex. The same is expected at our practice locations.



- Parents must be respectful of referees, particularly the young referees who are learning the game. Like your children, these young referees are learning the game. Refereeing is a difficult job. There is shortage of referees and without them the games are not possible. Club parents need to make a point to make referees feel comfortable during games, and it's appropriate to thank referees after games for supporting the development of their children. **Parents who criticize referees will be warned and if necessary suspended from viewing games.**

If a parent fails to follow this conduct policy, the following stepwise corrective actions will be taken:

- **First offense, Your child may be removed from the game**
- **If the improper conduct persists/is repeated he Referee or Field Marshal will be asked to have the disruptive parent removed from the field.**
- **If improper conduct is repeated, the offending parties will be asked not to attend games.**
- **If improper conduct still persists, The Player of the related party may be dismissed from The Club.**

In all cases improper conduct is the interpretation of the Coach, Referee or Field Marshal.

On Winning

- Parents must understand that The Club's priority is developing soccer players and not always winning soccer games. Many times during the season coaches will compromise their team's chances of winning soccer games in order play more players, play players in different positions or teach concepts, the introduction of which, may compromise the chances of winning that game, but will ultimately lead to long term success of both our players and team. There are games and possibly even tournaments that are entered with a priority on development of all players and not winning. **If asked to participate, all parents are expected to have their players available to participate in these events even when the coach may not be playing "to win" with its top lineup. These games are an important part of the development process.**
- Likewise, there are games when coaches place a greater priority on winning, often times at tournaments and playoff games and some players may play little if at all in those games. This is a competitive sport program and players are **not guaranteed playing time**. The club is a training organization and prepares players for a variety of teams including grammar school teams, high school teams, 2nd division teams, 1st division teams, tournament teams, showcase teams, state cup teams and ODP teams. **Because your son/daughter has played with their "team" at one level does not mean they will be picked for teams for higher levels, and if they are, there is no guarantee they will receive the same playing time on those teams when the team enters higher level playing environments.** Playing time is earned and at the discretion of the coach. As a parent of a competitive athlete **you must be supportive of the coaches decisions. Being part of a team means bringing enthusiasm and support to your team even when your role on the team may not be what you'd like it to be.**



Managing your relationship with your Coach

- Attracting and retaining quality coaches is the key to a successful soccer club. On average coaches donate two hours of their time in team administration for every hour they get paid to coach on the field. They give us 9 months of their weekends each year and many of their nights in order to advance our children's athletic interest. They are all volunteering to help our kids and we should be respectful of both their efforts and their time. All of them have outside jobs, and we also have to be respectful of that. Finding good coaches is a task that takes up a considerable amount of the club's board and club administrator's time.
- *The club's administration can find coaches, but ultimately it's the parents' job to retain them by creating an atmosphere that coaches want to coach in.* Florida Fire Juniors has a reputation as being a great place for a coach to work because of the civility of its parents. Please use the following rules to guide your relationship with your coaches:
- **While concerns and disputes are rare at our Club, they do occur from time to time. If you are unhappy with your "son/daughters" role on a Team or with The Club for ANY reason, there is a concerns process that we ask all to follow located on The Florida Fire Juniors website:**

<http://www.floridafirejuniors.com/DisputeResolution.php>

How you or your child feel about The Club is very important. Equally important is the way any concern is handled. While the no process is perfect, the one above was created to protect players, coaches and parents; Please give the process a full opportunity to constructively address any concerns that may arise.

Elements of this process include:

- Parents **may not to attempt to resolve any sensitive discussions via e-mail.** It's difficult to communicate tone via e-mail and too often coaches get accused of using "a poor choice or words" in an e-mail. Coaches are not writers, and they should not be put in a position where they are trying to communicate delicate information via e-mail. **If you have a question for a coach that is going to require more than a one sentence answer contact the team manager, explain the issue and request to meet them after practice to discuss it.** The problem with coaches is usually not that they don't care enough about the kids; it's that they care too much and it bleeds into their personal lives. Sending a late Friday night e-mail saying a player is really distraught, but you can't meet to talk about it for a week is not fair to the coach. Coaches worry about their players just like parents do and we don't want to worry our coaches more than we have to. Keep the issues in perspective, avoid hyperbole.
- Parents are prohibited from addressing coaches after games with questions about a coaches game time decisions. Games are emotional experiences and a parent/coach meeting when emotions are running high is a bad idea. Parents **may not contact a coach regarding playing time issues until a 48 hour "cooling off" period has occurred** after games and should setup a meeting with their coach to occur after practice.
- When you are discussing your son/daughter with your coach it's important that the conversation stay within the boundaries of your son/daughter. It's inappropriate to bring other players on the team into the discussion, or for parents to make statements regarding their opinions of a coach's competence, give their personal evaluation of the coach etc. The club's administration is the only entity that delivers coaches evaluations. You should feel free to express any concerns about a coach with the club's director. At the end of the year, we'll send out a survey and allow you to evaluate your coach for the year. **Our experience suggests that it's better to evaluate a coach at the end of the year when you can review**



the whole body of work, rather than after a particular game. Too often parents in youth sports react to a particular game rather than evaluating the process.

- Very infrequently, but still more times than we'd like, we have a parent who is frustrated by their son/daughters role on a team and decides to vent their frustration, by making statements that are designed to hurt the coach or create discord with other parents. **Parents who engaged in this kind of conduct will receive a warning from the club on the first incident, and be asked to leave the club on the second.** If a parent took it upon themselves to create an unpleasant atmosphere for a coach, and the coach decided they no longer wanted to volunteer to coach youth sports, that parent will have potentially impacted the development of other players on the team, other players in the club and in the community. When a parent oversteps these boundaries, it inevitably impacts their son/daughter and their relationship with other parents on the team. Civility and constructive face to face dialogue always trumps emotional statements made in frustration in youth sports.
- **Parents should remember that while they may be dissatisfied with their son/daughters role on a team, their view is rarely shared by other parents on the team, as one player getting more playing means another parents son/daughter getting less playing time. These opinions are best kept private to avoid creating conflicts among parents.**
- Parents are encouraged to be vocally supporting of their team during a game, but discouraged from giving tactical advice to their teams and son/daughter. Parents are not privy to what the coaches are telling the kids, and often countermand instructions, which is frustrating to coaches. Always keep in mind that the coach is the coach.

Supporting the Organization

- Parents may be asked to contribute volunteer hours or contribute to fundraising efforts. Youth sports organizations are a lot of work and they require participation from the entire parent pool to be successful. If you can't contribute much yourself, be supportive of the efforts of others to foster the development of your children.

I understand and will abide by Florida Fire Juniors's Parent Code Conduct and will help make Florida Fire Juniors a great place for kids to play, coaches to coach, and parents to watch the great game of soccer.