



Gulf Coast Youth Soccer Club Parents' Handbook

www.GCYSC.com

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WELCOME!

Gulf Coast Soccer is the largest youth sports organization in mid-south Jefferson County, and we are delighted that you have chosen to be part of our club! We have dedicated ourselves to providing a fun, positive, and education-centered experience for all our players.

We have also declared our intent to become a Model Soccer Club, setting the standard for excellence not just in SE Texas, but on a regional and national level. This vision requires a number of things from us, including continuous efforts to improve all aspects of our programs, administration, coaching, refereeing, facilities, and community engagement.

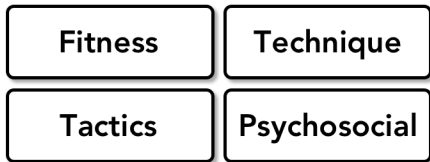
Please take a few minutes now to read the information provided in this handbook. Whether you have been a lifelong soccer enthusiast or are new to the game, we are sure that you'll benefit from this handy reference. In addition, we have provided much more information—including documents, forms, and videos—on the GCYSC.com website, so be sure to go there next after you have read through the contents of this handbook.



Robert Parr
Technical Director
Gulf Coast Soccer

PILLARS OF SOCCER DEVELOPMENT

When we consider what it means to "develop as a player", we must begin with defining the four components of the game:



- Fitness is defined as a player's "ability to do work", and must be viewed in terms of soccer-specific demands. Fitness elements include speed, endurance, agility, balance, coordination, flexibility, strength, power, and aerobic and anaerobic energy systems.
- **Technique** refers to a player's "ability to manipulate the ball". For field players, technique includes dribbling, receiving, passing, shooting, heading, and more. Goalkeepers share these technical demands, and also must master other goalkeeper-specific techniques, such as catching, diving, deflecting, and distribution. The goal of technical development is to create skillful players who can perform a full range of techniques when under game-level pressure.

- **Tactics** should be understood as synonymous with "game decisions" or "decision-making". At the individual level, players must choose when, where, and how to run, dribble, pass, tackle, and so on. Players combine with others to execute small-sided tactics (and ultimately team-level tactics), and must understand the best individual decisions for each moment of the game to be effective collectively.
- The **Psychosocial** component includes both sport psychology (a player's "mentality and attitude") and social factors (such as nutrition, lifestyle, and interpersonal relationships). A player's psychosocial profile will include such factors as confidence, self-awareness, motivation, competitiveness, cooperation, empowerment, persistence, self-discipline, and more.

Every aspect of a player's (or team's) success (or failure) within the game can be traced back to one or more of these four components. However, coaches must remain aware of developmentally-appropriate considerations, as the model best describes the demands of the "adult game", rather than the "youth game". For example, "fitness training" for young players calls for a focus on gross motor skills (such as skipping, jumping, spinning, and somersaults), and not endurance training or weight-lifting! Technical development and psychosocial considerations must receive the highest priorities for pre-adolescent players. As players mature, fitness and tactics take on much greater relative importance.

PROGRAMS

We offer a wide variety of soccer programs to meet the needs of players of all ages, abilities, and interest levels. We understand and appreciate that some kids want to play year-round, while others may want to play just one season a year. Some kids want to play “just for fun” while others want to challenge themselves to train and play at the highest level possible.

Players enter the game at different ages, with varying levels of athletic ability, and develop at their own pace. We strive to provide full-service soccer options throughout their youth career. As players mature and their needs, interests, and ability levels change, they can move back and forth between programs or playing levels at Gulf Coast.



Stages of Player Development

Our programs are designed to grow with you as your age, abilities, and interests change over time.



Training to Compete
U11-U14 Select



Training to Win
U15+ Select



Active Start

U4 First Touch
U5-U6 Micro



FUNDamental Stage

U7-U8 Rec
U7-U8 Academy



Foundational Stage

U9-U10 Rec
U9-U10 Academy



Active Lifestyle

U11+ Rec

First Touch (U4)

The First Touch Program is designed specifically for 3- and 4-year-olds who are ready to take their first touches on the ball in an organized soccer setting. This is a parent-child participation program where the focus is on social development and physical literacy in an age-appropriate manner.

Our U4s are not placed on "teams", unlike the traditional programs used for older players. Instead, each week's session involves the parent and child working together to accomplish a task or to rehearse a new skill. Parents receive a copy of the lesson plan at the end of each session, so they

can repeat the activities at home with their child several times during the following week.

Micro (U5-U6)

The Micro Soccer Program offers 4- and 5-year olds an introduction to the game in an age appropriate manner. The focus is on helping your child learn basic skills and develop a lifelong love for the sport of soccer.

Players are placed on coed teams which are randomly selected to promote even teams and equal distributions of boys and girls. Each team holds two 45-minute practice sessions during the week, then plays a 3v3 game on Saturday.

Micro teams use the "New Ball" Continuous Play format. There are no goalkeepers, no restarts other than kick-offs, and players are discouraged from simply standing in front of their defensive goal. Whenever a ball goes out of play, a coach (positioned behind the closest goal) holds up a ball, calls "New Ball!" to direct the players' attention to that ball, then rolls it to an open space in either corner on that end of the field.

This format greatly increases the number of touches on the ball and the total amount of running for each player in each game. The challenge of getting the ball can be "slanted" to match the different abilities of the players on the field. In this

way, we accelerate the development of ball skills and increase each player's enjoyment of the game.

Academy (U7-U10)

The Academy Program serves boys and girls from U7 through U10. It provides a more formal and faster-paced level of technical training that prepares players for higher levels of play at U11 and above.

Unlike a traditional team-centered approach, the Academy focuses on individual player development through an ability-based training program. Every practice follows a lesson plan drawn from our long-term player development curriculum, which emphasizes individual skill development and small-group tactics over all other priorities at these ages.

Players train during the week in “pools” of players who share similar levels of ability, then play weekend games on mixed-ability teams that allow for balanced competition. All practices are led by our professional training staff, with the assistance of our volunteer team coaches.

The Academy is intended to be a full-year program, but players may join in the spring season if they did not participate in the Academy during the previous fall season.

Recreational (U7-U19)

The Recreational Soccer Program is designed to provide all players with a chance to play and learn soccer without the

costs of travel or high-level competition. The focus is on participation, team building, sportsmanship, physical fitness, skill development, building confidence, self-esteem and having fun. Most age groups use small-sided formats to simplify the game and reduce physical demands while maximizing ball touches for all players.

Teams are formed through a random allocation format to create balanced teams. Our goal is to have evenly-matched teams playing in closely competitive games that are fun and exciting for all participants and spectators. Teams are led by volunteer coaches, and we provide a detailed curriculum with full-season training plans to all team coaches. In addition, recreational players can enroll in our Skills Club Program, which is a supplemental training program offered once per week each season.

Select (U11-U19)

Our Select Program offers a more rigorous training environment and a higher level of competition for players U11 and older. There are a variety of competition levels available to select-level players, ranging from our local Division II league to the Premier (Super II and Division I) leagues that play a mixture of games in SE Texas, Houston and beyond. To meet the needs of all our players, Gulf Coast seeks to field tiered teams at both the Premier and Division II levels for all age groups from U11 through U19.

Our curriculum is designed to develop skilled, intelligent, and well-rounded players, and is delivered by licensed trainers and coaches. Training is provided three days per week, 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 hours per session. One session will focus on technical/tactical topics, one on team tactics, and one on functional (position-specific) training. Players will be expected to attend at least two sessions each week, and will be strongly encouraged to attend all three each week.

The Select Program is intended to be a full-year program. Teams are formed via player evaluations in May and June, but players may join in the spring season if there are roster spaces available on teams. We strive to provide a value-based program that is convenient and affordable for all families, that offers playing levels appropriate for players of all ability levels, and that fosters a love of the game.

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Gulf Coast relies on hundreds of volunteers each year to provide high-quality soccer programs to our community. If you are not currently volunteering at the club, please find a role from the list below and volunteer to help today!

Board of Directors and Standing Committees

The Board of Directors oversees all aspects of the club's operations. Each position is elected for a staggered two-year term, and each Board Member has responsibility for oversight of a specific program or service (see chart on the next page).

We also have a number of standing committees that focus on specific aspects of the club's operations, including: Facilities, Financial Aid, Fundraising and Sponsorships, Marketing and Publicity, Registration, and committees for each of our programs. Each committee is chaired by a Board Member, and is guided by a specific charter that supports and advances our mission.

If you are interested in filling a position on the Board, please contact Keith Riggs, at keith.riggs@gcysc.com. To join a specific committee, please contact the Board Member who chairs that committee, using the contact details posted on the GCYSC.com website.

- **President.** Presides over all Board Meetings, represents the club at the Association and State level, and makes appointments to fill vacancies on committees or on the Board.
- **Vice-President.** Acts in the absence of the President, chairs the Appeals & Discipline committee, and chairs the Facilities committee.
- **Secretary.** Records and distributes minutes of all Board meetings, administers club elections, and chairs the Financial Aid committee.
- **Treasurer.** Maintains all financial records and accounts, reports current financial status to the Board monthly, ensures all tax and compliance filings are done, and chairs the Budget committee.
- **Referee Assignor.** Recruits and trains referees to officiate all home games, maintains current certification as a US Soccer Referee Assignor, and schedules full crews to officiate all home games.
- **Registrar.** Organizes registration for each season, works with program directors to form teams, registers all players with local/state associations, and submits background checks for all adult volunteers.
- **Fundraising Director.** Identifies and leads seasonal fundraising activities, and chairs the Fundraising committee.
- **Sponsorships Director.** Solicits donations from sponsors, ensures all sponsorship agreements are activated correctly, and chairs the Sponsorships committee.
- **Marketing and Public Relations Director.** Plans and administers all aspects of the club's marketing, communications, and public relations, and chairs the Marketing and Publicity committee.
- **Select Program Director.** Coordinates scheduling for all select teams, and serves as point of escalation for issues affecting select teams.
- **Team Managers Director.** Recruits and trains all Team Managers.
- **Academy Program Director, Rec Program Director & Micro Program Director.** Recruit coaches and age group coordinators, form teams, coordinate practice/game schedules, and communicate with parents and coaches for their assigned programs.

Team Managers

Each team is asked to identify one volunteer to serve as the Team Manager. This individual assists the team's coaches with any administrative duties that need to be handled, including regular communication with parents, issues related to uniforms, team pictures, team fundraisers, tournament plans, and schedules.

Communications

To serve our members as effectively as possible, we communicate important information throughout the year using a wide array of channels:

- **Website.** The club's website (www.gcysc.com) serves as our official "system of record" on nearly any topic that pertains to the club's operations or our members. We maintain current information similar to the contents of this handbook, but are able to provide much, much greater detail online.
- **Email.** We will send out periodic (but very important) emails throughout the year, including details on team schedules, coaching contacts, player registration, and postseason member surveys. It is essential that all members maintain a valid email address with the club, and that they check this email account regularly!

- **Text Messaging.** Information that is extremely time-sensitive (such as notices regarding field closures or lightning delays) will be sent out via the REMIND text messaging service. To join, text the number **81010** with the message **@GCSOCC**.
- **Social Media.** We have a very active Facebook page, where you will find the latest club announcements, photos, and quick responses to your questions. Our members contribute regularly to our Instagram page, and we recently introduced our own YouTube channel where our players, coaches, referees, and parents will find informational videos to watch to learn more about the game.
- **In-person Meetings.** We ask each team to have a preseason meeting to make sure that parents and coaches are organized for the season ahead. We conduct regular training sessions for our coaches and referees to provide them with the tools they need to be successful. The club also holds periodic presentations for all our parents to keep them informed on a wide range of topics, including our strategic plans, the player development process, college soccer recruiting, and more.

- **Handbooks and Handouts.** Even in the "always connected" Internet era, there are some times when paper is best! Handbooks like this one allow you to dedicate a few minutes to learning more about the club, the game, and your child's experience without constant distractions found on your digital devices.

Whenever you need help with a question or issue, please reach out first to your team's coach or team manager. If they are not able to assist you to your satisfaction, you should contact the appropriate Program Director for your team.

COACHING

Outside of parents, coaches are the single-most important influence on a child's experience in organized sports. We invest heavily each year to ensure that our coaches have the guidance and resources they require to serve the needs of the young players on their teams.

Technical Director

Our coaches are led by Robert Parr, the club's full-time Technical Director. Coach Parr has spent 30 years in coaching at nearly all levels of the game. He holds a USSF 'A' license, NSCAA Premier Diploma, and a USSF National Youth Coaching license. He currently serves as a Consultant for the NSCAA's Club Standards Project, and is an Associate Instructor for both US Youth Soccer and the NSCAA.

From 2009-2014, Coach Parr was the Director of Coaching for the Arkansas State Soccer Association (2009-2014). In 2008, he served as the Director of Coaching and WPSL Head Coach for the Puerto Rico Capitals FC, the first international franchise to compete in the Women's Premier Soccer League. From 2003-2008, he was the Head Women's Soccer Coach at Georgia College & State University and also coached for the Georgia Olympic Development Program.

From 1995-2002, Robert was the Director of Training for the American Soccer Club "Eagles" youth program in Austin, Texas (now known as Lonestar SC). He also served as the

South Texas Men's State Team Coach from 1996-1998, and a South Texas YSA State Staff Coach for both the Olympic Development Program (1991-1999) and the Coaching Education Program (1991-2002 & 2015-present). From 1989 until 1995, Robert was the Head Coach of the University of Texas Men's Soccer Team, where he led the program to a National Collegiate Club Championship in 1990, three other National Tournament appearances, and an overall record of 80-25-16.

Training Staff

The club maintains a staff of 10-15 professional, part-time Trainers who run practices in a variety of programs, including the Select, Academy, First Touch, and Skills Club programs. These trainers have a background as players and have been trained in developmentally-appropriate coaching methods, and are hired and supervised by the club's Technical Director.

Team Coaches

We rely on hundreds of volunteers to serve as team coaches each season. Regardless of the age group or playing level, we seek to have a Head Coach and an Assistant Coach for every team. In this way, we distribute the coaching responsibility so that more people can balance the time demands of coaching with their other obligations, and we offer more individual attention for all our players than would be possible with just one coach per team.

Team coaches generally set the practice schedule for their players, and are responsible for leading developmentally-appropriate practices that follow the curriculum set forth by the club's Technical Director. Team coaches also are responsible for managing their teams at each game, ensuring that all players have the opportunity to play in a fun, positive, and safe environment.

Coaching Education

Coaching education represents the best way to become a competent, confident coach. Gulf Coast ensures that our coaches have access to an extensive program of formal coaching education and informal mentoring, including the following certifications:

- **"F" Coaching License.** This certification is provided entirely online by US Soccer, and can be completed in just two hours (or in smaller increments done over a number of days). It is the "entry-level" coaching course, covering basic, but essential, concepts for coaches of all ages and playing levels. **All youth soccer coaches should hold this license, and we encourage all parents of youth soccer players to complete this course as well.**
- **Grassroots Coaching Course.** This one-day supplement to the "F" License offers 6 hours of in-person classroom and on-the-field instruction for coaches of U5 through U12 players.

- **"E" Coaching License.** This 18-hour course is conducted each summer in SE Texas. Coaches participate in a mix of classroom and on-field sessions over a long weekend (Friday night through Sunday afternoon) to learn how to run effective practices for players at the U9 and older age groups. This course is required for all select-level (D1/D2) coaches at the U11 and older age groups.
- **"D" Coaching License.** This advanced-level course focuses on the technical, tactical, and physical demands of the game at the U13 and older age groups. Coaches attend two full weekends of in-person training, and also complete a series of online and practical assignments during an extended practice phase between the class dates. All coaches of teams playing above the D2 level are required to hold this certification.

Gulf Coast reimburses active coaches for their course registration fees as they complete each of these training programs (simply turn in a copy of your completion certificate to the Technical Director). In addition, we will hold a number of free (in-house) coaching orientation or training seminars throughout the year for coaches in each of our different programs.

REFEREES

Being a soccer referee can be both rewarding and fulfilling. At Gulf Coast Soccer, we believe that recruiting, training and retaining quality referees is vital to our long term success as a club, as it directly impacts our ability to train our players and coaches on the Laws of the Game and fair play.

We also believe that referees should be treated with courtesy and respect by all participants. While we are fortunate that most of our members are naturally polite and courteous towards referees, we continue to educate our players, parents and coaches to be respectful of all participants in our competitions. We have a zero tolerance policy toward referee disrespect or abuse of any kind.

Referee Assignor

Our club Referee Assignor seeks to ensure that all matches played at Gulf Coast have a full crew of referees who are qualified to officiate those matches. To achieve this goal, the Referee Assignor recruits prospective referees, coordinates training programs, tracks the current status of each referee's certification, communicates with referees regarding their weekly game assignments, and enlists the help of experienced referees to serve as mentors for younger, newer officials.

If you are interesting in becoming a referee, please email Adam Vannett at RefAssignor@gcysc.com.

US Soccer Certification Program

US Soccer offers two entry-level referee certifications: Recreational Referee Grade 9 and Referee Grade 8. However, Referee Grade 8 is the most popular. This program is administered through South Texas Soccer Referees, Inc. (STSR) and is the formal referee training program for the South Texas Youth Soccer Association. Grade 8 Referees are qualified to officiate any youth soccer games played at Gulf Coast or at other local youth soccer clubs.

Club Referee Program

Since STSR only offers clinics 1-2 times per year, Gulf Coast Soccer has created an in-house training and mentoring program for new referees. With our Club Referee Program, we aim to improve both the quantity and quality of our referees. This program serves as an entry point to supplement the existing STSR training for higher-levels of referee certification, and most Club Referees should be ready to certify through STSR as a Grade 8 referee within a year. Club Referees are limited to officiating our in-house Recreational and Academy games.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS, COACHES & SPECTATORS

Gulf Coast Soccer is committed to being much more than simply “a place to play soccer”. Through soccer, our members learn teamwork, sportsmanship, and respect for themselves and others. As a condition of continued participation, all of our coaches, team managers, parents, and spectators agree to abide by the following Code of Conduct:

1. **I support a playing environment that is “family-friendly”.** I will refrain from the use of tobacco products, alcohol, drugs, and profanity whenever I am in the presence of youth soccer players or their siblings.
2. **I respect that coaches take on a huge responsibility when they agree to lead a group of children.** To help my child's coach with planning, I will communicate promptly, in advance, whenever my child will miss a practice or game. I will not coach my child or any other players from the sidelines unless I am one of the official coaches of the team. I will not undermine any coach's authority in front of any player, and I will wait at least 24 hours after any game before approaching a coach with any concerns I may have regarding that coach's management of a team. If I feel I can do a better job than the current coaches, I will volunteer to coach a team before the next season begins.

3. **I recognize that referees are essential to the game.** I (and my guests) will not engage in any kind of dissent or unsporting conduct toward any official. I will learn the Laws of the Game and the policies of the league, since knowing the rules will help with development and with minimizing disagreements. If I see that the club needs more (or better) referees, I will complete a referee training program and make myself available to work as a referee at the first opportunity.
4. **I understand that soccer is hard to play well, and that it takes many years of practice to reach a high standard.** If players never fail, then they never learn, so I will encourage my child to try new things and to accept that mistakes are part of the game for everyone. I realize that learning occurs in practices much more than in games, so I will ensure that my child is able to attend practices consistently. I also understand that players need to focus on different learning objectives at different stages of their development, and will support the coaches as they stay focused on long-term growth, even at the expense of short-term results.
5. **I embrace good sportsmanship.** I will applaud good, positive play whenever it occurs, whether by the team I support or the opposition. I will not ridicule any participant (including my child or my child's coach) for making a mistake or for losing a competition.

6. **I accept that player safety is a shared responsibility.** I will never encourage behavior that would endanger the health and well-being of any participant. I will be vigilant in monitoring the soccer facilities for any safety hazards (such as unsecured goals or unfilled holes) and will immediately act to resolve any such situations. I will communicate with my child's coach about any disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.

7. **I realize that children play soccer for their own reasons, which may not align with mine as an adult.** Children play sports to have fun with their friends, to learn new skills, to be physically active, and to test themselves with appropriate competition. I will teach my child that hard work and honest effort are more important than winning any single game. I will support my child by encouraging him or her to pursue his or her own goals for each practice, game, and season. I will avoid all critical discussions of my child's performances during the car ride to or from a game, unless my child asks for my feedback first (without prompting from me).

8. **I realize that as a fan, I represent Gulf Coast Soccer and the community it serves.** I accept that poor behavior during practices or games may result in expulsion from the soccer facility, and that repeated incidents may result in expulsion for me and my family from the club.

HABITS FOR SUCCESS FOR PLAYERS

1. **Be there.** If players do not show up for training on time, every time, then they miss important information and preparation, and they punish their teammates by not progressing at an acceptable pace. If a player **MUST** miss a session, then he/she must notify the coach well in advance so that the coach can adjust his/her training plan accordingly. In addition, the player should seek ways to make up the missed training, ideally by attending a session that week with a different group of players in the club.
2. **Be ready.** Considering how little time we have for training each week (and the importance of proper warm-ups before practices and games), every player must arrive at the field ready to play. This means:
 - every player brings a properly-inflated ball to every practice and every game
 - every player has a sufficient supply of water
 - jersey, shorts, shinguards, socks, and cleats are already ON
 - socks are pulled UP
 - shirts are TUCKED IN
 - players start moving and working with the ball even before their teammates and coaches have arrived
 - no shooting on goal until the TEAM has finished warming up

3. **Work hard.** To elevate our level of play to that of the best programs in the country, we must raise the intensity of our training and game play. The single-greatest difference between the very top players and everyone else is their work rate every time they take the field, regardless of whether millions of people are watching or no one is watching. This begins with some simple habits, such as always sprinting in and out of water breaks, and sprinting in to the group when the coach calls you together.
4. **Be respectful.** To earn respect, we must begin by giving it. This means we conduct ourselves in a positive and respectful manner with everyone else involved with the game, including our opponents, our teammates, coaches, referees, and spectators. It also means we respect the fields, and commit to leave every field we use cleaner than it was when we arrived.
5. **Be positive.** There are many things we can't control in the game, but we can always control our attitude and our effort. Encourage your teammates, and they will encourage you in return. Support your teammates, and they will work that much harder to help you. If you can't do a particular skill today, keep on trying until you can, with the belief that you can learn anything if you practice at it enough.

6. **Play often.** The development of muscle memory requires a tremendous amount of repetition combined with an equal amount of variation. You won't improve very much if you only play once or twice a week! Since "drills" are often boring (and not entirely applicable to game conditions), the best way to improve fitness, technique, and game awareness is to train and play in small-sided, competitive games as much as possible.
7. **Trap first.** Kicking is not soccer! Everything that a player can do offensively requires that he or she first establish complete control of the ball. The quality of subsequent shots, passes, or dribbles will improve dramatically once the ball has been brought down to the feet. In addition, supporting players need a little bit of time to make effective runs off the ball, and they can only do this if the first attacker controls the ball on the first touch.

QUICK GUIDE TO THE GAME

Although soccer has been a vibrant part of American life for many decades now, many people are still coming to the game for the first time. To help you enjoy more from your time at the soccer fields, be sure to review this brief reference to the rules, terminology, and traditions of soccer.

The Object of the Game

Two teams compete to score more goals than the other team before time expires. Each team has a goal to defend at one end, and a goal to attack at the other end. Players generally use their feet to control and move the ball around the field, although they may also use their thighs, chest, or even head to play the ball.

A goal is scored only when all of the ball has crossed all of the goal line, inside the goal. Games may end in tied scores, except in certain tournaments that will use overtime periods and penalty kick shootouts to determine a winner.

Soccer Positions and Playing Formats

The game evolves as players move from the youngest age group to the older ones. Although we are always working to prepare players for the "big game", we do not want players "typecast" into just one or two positions until at least after they have become adolescents. Prior to this time, players need to

experience playing in all different positions on the field to help them become well-rounded soccer athletes.

In general, we organize players into four main roles on the field:

- **Forward.** The forwards (sometimes call "strikers") play as close as possible to the other team's goal. Their main task is to create and score goals, but they are also the first line of defense in many situations.
- **Midfielder.** Midfielders generally occupy the central half of the field, playing behind the forwards and in front of the defenders. Their main tasks are to maintain possession of the ball on offense and to limit attacking space for the opponents when on defense.
- **Defender.** Defenders play in front of the goalkeeper and behind the midfielders. Their main duties are to prevent shots and breakaways by the opposing attackers, to win possession of the ball, and to support the team's attack with forward runs out of the back.
- **Goalkeeper (GK).** The goalkeeper (or "keeper") is generally the "last line of defense". The keeper is the only player on each team who is permitted to use the arms or hands to play the ball, provided the keeper is within his own penalty area. Teams at U8 and younger do not play with a keeper. We do not call the goalkeeper a "goalie"—soccer isn't hockey!

At the Micro level, players will not have positions, but instead are encouraged to always go for the ball. At this very early stage, every player learns to attack and defend without concern for "team shape".

At the U7/U8 level, teams are encouraged to maintain a "diamond" shape, with one player slightly ahead of the others (a forward), one slightly behind (a defender), and one player on each side of the field (the midfielders). Players should not be anchored on defense directly in front of each goal!

We introduce the goalkeeper for U9/U10 teams, and also add field players to play 7v7. Teams will often use a 1-3-2-1 formation (the "Christmas tree" shape), with a keeper, three defenders, two midfielders, and one forward, although other arrangements are also common.

U11/U12 teams play 9v9, and will generally add another midfielder and another forward to play 1-3-3-2 (one goalkeeper, three defenders, three midfielders, and two forwards).

11v11 soccer will be played for the first time at U13, although older players who are new to soccer will generally be better-off by playing small-sided (4v4 through 7v7) games until they gain more experience.

The following chart summarizes some of the key modifications made for each age group of youth soccer:

Spring 2017	U5/U6	U7/U8	U9/U10	U11/U12	U13/U14
Players	3v3	4v4	7v7	9v9	11v11
Keepers?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ball Size	3	3	4	4	5
Game Time	4 x 8' quarters	4 x 10' quarters	2 x 25' halves	2 x 30' halves	2 x 35' halves
Goal Size	4'x6'	4'x6'	6.5'x18.5' (varies)	7'x21' (varies)	8'x24'
Field Size (Preferred)	28x20 yds	35x25 yds	66x40 yds	76x60 yds	110x65 yds
Center Circle	None	5 yd radius	7 yd radius	8 yd radius	10 yd radius
Goal Area	None	None	4x14 yds	5x16 yds	6x20 yds
Penalty Area	None	None	10x26 yds	15x36 yds	18x44 yds
Penalty Spot	None	None	7 yds	10 yds	12 yds
Corner Arc	None	None	1 yd	1 yd	1 yd
Throw-ins	None	"Best Effort"	One retry allowed	Standard	Standard
Goal Kicks	None	Retreat	Retreat	Standard	Standard
Free Kicks	None	Indirect only	Direct & Indirect	Direct & Indirect	Direct & Indirect
Red/Yellow Cards?	No (sub player)	No (sub player)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Offside?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Soccer Restarts

After the ball goes out of play or the game is stopped for any reason, we use the following "restarts" to resume play:

- **Kick-off.** A kick taken from the center spot at the start of each half (or quarter, in younger age groups) to start play. If a team allows a goal, that team takes a kick-off to restart the game.
- **Goal Kick.** Awarded to the defending team when the attacking team knocks the ball out of bounds over the goal line. The ball is kicked from the goal area, and must exit the penalty area before any other player can touch it. For U7-U10 players, everyone on the defending team must also retreat behind the halfway line until the ball has been kicked for each goal kick.
- **Corner Kick.** Awarded to the attacking team if the defending team knocks the ball out of bounds over the goal line (but not into the goal). The kick is taken from the corner nearest to where the ball went out of play.
- **Throw-in.** Awarded to the attacking team when the opposing team knocks the ball out of play across either touch line. The thrower must deliver the ball from behind the head using both hands while

keeping part of each foot in contact with the ground.

- **Dropped Ball.** Used to restart play whenever the referee stops the game for any reason not related to an infraction of the rules (such as to attend to a serious injury). The ball must hit the ground before it can be played by a member of either team. This restart does not have to be "contested", as players often kick the dropped ball to the opposing team in a show of sportsmanship.
- **Free Kick.** Awarded to a team after an infraction of the rules by the opposing team. The kick is taken from the spot where the foul occurred. Minor infractions result in indirect free kicks, which require the ball to be played by more than one player before a goal can be scored. More serious fouls result in a direct free kick, which the kicker can strike directly into the goal to score.
- **Penalty Kick.** Awarded to the attacking team when a major foul is committed by the defending team inside its own penalty area. The kick is taken from the penalty spot. Only the kicker and the opposing goalkeeper are allowed in the penalty area until after the ball has been kicked.

Note that we simplify the game for our U5/U6 Micro players by using the "New Ball!" format, which eliminates all restarts except for the kick-off.

Fouls and Misconduct

A foul is an action by a player on the field against another player, while the ball is in play, that is prohibited by the Laws of the Game. The more serious fouls result in a direct free kick, whereas lesser offenses result in an indirect free kick, as shown in the chart below:

Direct Free Kicks (Major Fouls)	Indirect Free Kicks (Minor Fouls or Offenses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Kicking (or attempting to kick) an opponent● Tripping (or attempting to trip) an opponent● Striking (or attempting to strike) an opponent● Jumping at an opponent● Charging an opponent● Pushing an opponent● Holding an opponent● Spitting at an opponent● Tackling an opponent from behind● Deliberately handling the ball with any part of the hand or arm (except for goalkeepers in their own penalty area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Offside● Dangerous play● Impeding (obstructing) an opponent when not playing the ball● Interfering with the opposing goalkeeper's distribution● A goalkeeper holding the ball longer than 6 seconds● A goalkeeper handling the ball twice without it being played by an opponent (anywhere) or teammate (outside the penalty area)● A goalkeeper handling the ball from a deliberate passback or teammate's throw-in

If a major foul is committed in a team's own penalty area, then the other team receives a penalty kick instead of a direct free kick.

Players who commit misconduct as shown below will be cautioned (shown a yellow card) or sent off (shown a red card) by the referee. A player who is sent off must leave the game, cannot return to the game, and can not be replaced (so the team must "play short" for the duration of the game).

Cautions (Yellow Card)	Sending Off (Red Card)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsporting behavior (including cynical play, reckless fouls and simulation)• Dissent toward the officials via words or actions• Persistent infringement (committing many fouls, individually or as a team)• Delaying the restart of play• Fails to respect the required distance on free kicks or corner kicks (encroachment)• Entering the field of play without permission from the referee• Leaving the field without the permission of the referee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serious foul play (using excessive force while competing for the ball)• Violent conduct (in any other form)• Spitting at someone• Preventing a goal by handling the ball (except for the goalkeeper in the penalty area)• Denying a clear goal-scoring opportunity (with a foul)• Using offensive language or gestures• Being cautioned a second time in the same game

Parents and spectators can not be "red carded", but they can be sent away from a match by the referee for inappropriate behavior. In these instances, there is an **automatic two-week ban** (which may be extended) from attending all soccer-related activities, including practices and games.

Soccer Terminology

Here is a short list of soccer terms that describe many important skills in the game:

- **Breakaway.** When an attacker with the ball makes it past the last defender and is dribbling toward goal for a one-on-one challenge with the opposing goalkeeper.
- **Chip.** A short, lofted pass or shot.
- **Cross.** A service (on the ground or in the air) from the wide areas of the field toward the center of the field designed to get the ball to a teammate in front of the goal.
- **Dribble.** The basic skill of using the feet to move the ball around the field while keeping it under close control.
- **Header.** When a player strikes the ball deliberately using the forehead, typically to win a "50/50" ball out of the air or to redirect a ball toward the goal.

- **Juggling.** Keeping the ball in the air using any part of the body (other than the hands or the arms).
- **Marking.** Closely defending a player (one-on-one) to prevent that player from receiving the ball or advancing with the ball down the field.
- **Receiving.** Using the foot, thigh, or chest to slow down and control balls out of the air or on the ground.
- **Tackle.** A strong challenge using the feet to take the ball away from an opponent.
- **Volley.** A kick of the ball while it is in the air, using either the instep or the inside of the foot, typically to shoot on goal or to clear the ball away from your own goal.

Soccer Culture and Customs

As is true for every sport, soccer has its own traditions, customs, and nuances that players, coaches, and fans should understand and embrace, including the following:

- **Advantage.** There will be many instances when a foul has occurred, yet the referee will (correctly) allow play to continue without whistling for the foul. This is known as the "Advantage Clause". If the team suffering the foul would be disadvantaged by having play interrupted, the referee will hold his

arms out wide and say "Play on!". Should the expected advantage not materialize in the next moment, the referee may make a delayed call and "bring the ball back" to the spot of the foul. A referee may also caution a player for an earlier infraction after allowing the advantage to play out.

- **Weather.** Soccer is played in nearly all weather conditions, including cold, rain, and high heat. However, we will always remain vigilant regarding player safety, so games will be stopped if lightning is in the area, and players will be provided with frequent water breaks if the heat index is high.
- **Time outs.** Unlike most other team sports, soccer is a "player's game" rather than a "coach's game". Soccer does not have "time outs", and the field is much too large (and chaotic) for coaches to "direct" the actions of players in real-time during games.

As a result, coaches must use practices to teach players how to make good decisions in games on (and off) the ball. Coaches (and parents) should not direct any comments at the player with the ball, as this only slows the player down. The continuous nature of soccer also requires players to have a greater level of fitness to be successful, because there are fewer opportunities to recover during the match.

- **Injuries.** If a player has suffered what appears to be a minor injury, play will continue until the next natural stoppage (such as a throw-in or goal kick). At that point, the referee will quickly assess the player's condition, and may grant the coach of that player's team permission to enter the field to attend to the player. In the case of more serious injuries (such as ones involving the head or obvious bleeding), the referee will stop play to attend to the player faster. Players with a suspected concussion will not be permitted to return to play until cleared by a medical professional.

Note that during these stoppages, players should move away from the injured player and use this time to stretch, rehydrate, or talk among themselves about the game. They should never "take a knee"! This is not part of soccer culture, it generates undue stress for players regarding the condition of the injured player, and it can set players up for muscle injuries once play resumes.

- **Shaking hands.** Once the game is over, win or lose, all players and coaches are expected to shake hands with the other team to thank them for the game. In addition, players are encouraged to thank the game officials to recognize the important

role they play in providing a fun, safe soccer experience.

FACILITY LAYOUT

The Gulf Coast Soccer Complex is located at 5601 Twin City Hwy, Port Arthur TX 77642. The fields can be accessed via the entrance gate on Hogaboom Road and can be exited via the gate on Texas 347. To improve safety and traffic flow, traffic moves only **one way** between the two complex gates during all practice and game time periods.

