



Newton Girls Soccer Coaching Guidelines

Shaun McBrien

Director of Coaching

Introduction

Dear Coach

Welcome to Newton Girls Soccer! Thank you for dedicating your time and energy to coach within the NGS program and for being a vitally important part of the soccer community in Newton.

Newton Girls Soccer has a long successful history in its soccer program and with your help that tradition will continue to improve. Your contribution to the development of our young players is greatly appreciated and we thank you for helping us in our mission which is:

“To provide each NGS player the opportunity to learn and play soccer in a supportive and rewarding environment that emphasizes fun, individual skills development, teamwork and sportsmanship, all at a level that fits her interest and ability”.

Newton Girls Soccer is the largest girl’s only soccer organization in New England and is proud to be one of leading community based girls soccer programs. With your help we look forward to continuing with our proud tradition of giving our players a top quality soccer experience in a fun environment.

The Director of Coaching (DOC) has designed the following coach’s manual to help enhance the development of both players and coaches within NGS. In addition all coaches will be provided with the program’s curriculum including session plans and other coaching resources. The intent of providing these items is to increase the quality of our program and promote a consistent approach to teach soccer in Newton.

Should you have any questions about any of the content, please feel free to contact me by email at ngsdoc@newtongirlssoccer.org

I look forward to seeing you and your girls on the field soon. Until then, have fun and best of luck!!

Sincerely,

Shaun McBrien

Director of Coaching

Newton Girls Soccer

“Soccer is an art not a science and the game should be played attractively as well as effectively. Soccer is a game of skill, imagination, creativity and decision-making. Coaching should not stifle, but enhance those elements.” - Bobby Howe, U.S. Soccer, former director of coaching, professional and National Team coach

Coaching Girls Soccer

Girls playing sports is not about winning gold medals. It's about self-esteem, learning to compete and learning how hard you have to work in order to achieve your goals. — Jackie Joyner-Kersey Six-time Olympic gold medalist in track and field

Why should we care about girls' sports? Sports have the power to change a girl's life. A girl who plays sports has higher self-confidence, feels greater ownership of her body, and is more likely to make healthy decisions about drugs and alcohol, and even sex. Not only is her body changing but so are all the expectations imposed upon her. She is no longer encouraged to play and get dirty, she is supposed to wear makeup, care about boys, and find her way into the popular crowd. The pressure is on to grow up and "act like a girl." It is during this volatile time that a girl needs sports the most. This is the time to help a girl find her champion within.

Here are twelve tips on how and why to make the investment in a girls' sports program:

(Adaption from The Game Plan, building effective sports programs for girls)

1. **Find Her:** It's the most vulnerable girl whose life will improve the most from sports participation. She is often the one on the edge of the playground, seeming disinterested in sports. This girl has not been encouraged to try a sport or has been deterred by cultural messages about what is expected of her. Find this girl. Those who are the least involved are the individuals who stand to gain the most from sports.
2. **Meet Her Gatekeepers:** Parents and caregivers are a crucial ingredient to a girls' sports participation -- they can be the reason she plays or the reason she doesn't. Meet these people. Get to know them. Caregivers will be more likely to sign her up in sports if they trust the coach. Talk to them about the role sports can play in her social, emotional, physical, and academic development.
3. **Recruit Her:** A girl sometimes needs a little extra encouragement to participate in a sports program. Talk to her about what she will learn and what activities she will experience. Use existing players to demonstrate the program. Empower a girl to recruit other girls. Be persistent, sometimes a girl won't say yes to joining your team the first time you ask.
4. **Give Her Space:** A girl must feel safe in order to take the social risks and physical challenges associated with playing sports. Without a coach who knows her or teammates with whom she feels comfortable, a girl might be afraid to even try out. Supportive adults and peers, freedom from observation by boys, and a space that feels safe are important ingredients to making a girl feel comfortable and encouraged.
5. **Help Her Create Her Identity:** A girl derives strength, poise and purpose from identifying as an athlete. A girl who believes that sports are a part of her core identity is more likely to stick with it. An organized sports program and a skilled coach can help a girl develop this identity.
6. **She Understands Her Body:** Sports give a girl permission to feel strong in her body. Developing muscles, coordination and sport-specific skills can boost self-esteem during the time when a girl is negotiating the challenging world of adolescence. A girl who plays sports starts sexual activity later than girls who don't participate, is less likely to smoke and drink, and generally feels greater ownership of her body than a girl who is sedentary.
7. **She Has a Team:** Teammates are powerful. When a girl joins a team she instantly gains the benefit of meeting a group of girls who can be her friends, her allies, her confidantes. When girls work and play together like this they feel stronger and more empowered.
8. **She Has a Coach:** A coach is an influential role model. A girl will look up to a coach who has been through similar life circumstances and has succeeded – a coach who has faced her own barriers to sports and yet stays involved.

A coach who relates to girls on a regular basis can inspire a girl to keep believing and working towards her dreams in sports and beyond.

9. **Her Hero Is a Girl:** An older girl can be a powerful influence. She can have the skill and confidence to teach another girl how to lead. Use these role models. Recruit them, train them, form a youth leadership group, honor them as the experts on girls' sports.
10. **She Stays in School:** Staying in school increases the chances of a girl's success. A girl who participates in sports is more likely to experience academic success, have fewer discipline problems, and graduate from high school than a girl who does not play sports.
11. **She Stands up for Herself:** When a girl reaches adolescence, her self-confidence can plummet. Sports are the ideal environment in which to teach her to be strong, to use her voice, and to stand up for herself when challenged. Qualified coaches can teach a girl important leadership and communication skills that are critical to her success outside of a team.
12. **The Power of Sports:** Investing in girls' sports programming is investing in our economy and community. Sports have been shown to help girls stay in school, avoid teen pregnancy, and develop physical and psychological health. Sports can be thought of as a preventative strategy that can save girls, their families and our communities millions of dollars.

Role of the Coach

Sports can be a powerful vehicle to help girls reach their potential. But without skilled and caring coaches, sports can only do so much to help girls grow and develop. Coaches have the power to change lives. A great coach not only develops a young person's athletic skills, but also teaches perseverance, selflessness, loyalty, cooperation, and tolerance. A challenging yet supportive coach can help girls take risks, develop self-confidence, teach them to speak up and stand up for themselves, and support them through the rocky road of adolescence.

These are qualities that foster success well beyond the playing field – in school, work and family life. We believe that a skilled and committed coach can be a child's most powerful teacher.

The Coaching Challenge

It is estimated that approximately 70% of children quit sports by age 13. The Youth Sports Institute cited the following reasons for kids playing and quitting sports in a 2007 study. Subsequent follow-up studies have continued to validate these findings.

The 10 most important reasons I play my favorite sport.

In order of importance....

1. To have fun (Related to coaching)
2. To improve my skills (Related to coaching)
3. To stay in shape (Related to coaching)
4. To do something I'm good at (Related to Coaching)
5. For the excitement of competition (Related to coaching)
6. To get exercise (Related to coaching)
7. To play as part of a team (Related to coaching)
8. For the challenge of competition (Related to coaching)
9. To learn new skills (Related to coaching)
10. To win (Related to coaching)

The 11 most important reasons I stopped playing a sport.

In order of importance....

1. I lost interest. (Players don't develop ownership in the sport)
2. I was not having fun. (Adults are too critical of mistakes and self-expression)
3. It took too much time. (It takes approximately 10 years, or 10,000-hours to be proficient at anything)
4. Coach was a poor teacher. (Not being taught basic skills)
5. Too much pressure (Not understood by their coaches or parents / Pressure to perform)
6. Wanted a non-sport activity. (Some drop-out is inevitable)
7. I was tired of it. (Too much, too soon, perhaps?)
8. Needed more time for study.
9. Coach played favorites.
10. The sport was boring.
11. There was an overemphasis on winning.

Principles of Coaching Youth Soccer

Let Them Play!!

For many reasons our players and their families lead very busy lives. Often times being busy leads to players leading lives that are over-structured. When this structure carries over to the soccer field we start to develop players that don't make decisions for themselves. The struggle we face as coaches is to find a way to develop a training session that follows a plan, while still giving players the opportunity to play and make decisions while experiencing success and failure.

The key to having success designing your training sessions is to make sure that your activities follow these four simple rules:

1. Are your activities age appropriate?
2. Do your activities allow for decision making?
3. Do your activities have implications for the game?
4. Are your activities fun?

While these questions seem easy to follow, many coaches tend to use activities that are more drill like. The Timbers/Thorns prefer "game activities" for activities related to the game.

The 3 L's of Coaching

Coaching soccer is different from coaching many of the most popular sports in the United States. Most of the sports Americans grow up playing are coach centered. In football the coach calls the plays. In basketball the coach has designed a set offense and defense. In baseball there are situational rules that are absolute. Soccer is very different. During the games our players are in fluid situations that they may or may not have ever seen before. It is important that our training sessions put players into these game-like situations often. In order to do this we avoid the following:

- Lines
- Laps
- Lectures

The 3 L's listed above disrupt the development of players. As you can see, the 3 L's are defaults from other sports.

Sometimes it is difficult to think outside of the box to design games that don't have lines in them.

Here is an example. The old standby of teaching players to dribble by having them navigate a line of cones. While this does make players familiar with the properties of the ball, it does not allow them to decide for themselves which way they want to go. To make it more fluid we place the same cones in various places in an undefined space. The players then have to pick their heads up to find the various cones. This accomplishes the same technical development while allowing the players to have the freedom to make decisions.

Laps. Need I say more? Most players growing up looking at laps as a negative thing. Coaches often use laps to punish players for not paying attention or for showing up late. This is counterproductive for a few reasons. First, fitness should not be a punishment at the younger ages. If running has a negative stigma to it then players will not want to do it as they get older. Second, most often teams have limited time for training. If we use up the time we have making players run, how will they become better soccer players. Third, most players don't like to run for no reason. If the running isn't fun then soccer isn't fun.

Since most coaches grew up playing sports that are coach centered, they feel that the more they say the better coach they are. It is actually quite the opposite. In soccer we try to design activities that facilitate the player's development so that we don't have to coach as much. By having players participate in games that force them to make decisions, we allow the players to solve the problems for themselves.

As adults we develop some bad habits in our communication. It is important for us to use appropriate language when speaking to players and parents. The use of profane or vulgar language sets a poor example for our players.

Guided Discovery

As coaches we tend to want to solve problems for players. It is not uncommon to hear coaches yelling from the sidelines telling their players what to do. If players start to rely on the coaches and stop making decisions for themselves we are really developing robots and not players. To avoid this problem we use guided discovery to help players make their own decisions.

Guided discovery is the art of asking meaningful questions. By asking guided questions we help the players solve the problem on their own. This will give athletes the opportunity to practice problem solving and will help them to become more capable of solving problems that arise in games.

The goals of effective questioning are:

- Actively involving athletes in the learning process
- Enhancing their task mastery
- Enhancing their conceptual understanding
- Promoting both simple (low-order) and complex (high-order) thinking

An example of a low-order question is: What part of your body do you use to dribble the ball?

When the player answers this question they can use a one word answer. Along with questions like this, we also like to ask questions that require players to have more in depth answers. An example of a high end question is: How can we get the ball down the field quickly? When the player answers this question they will use their own thoughts and opinions. The use of Low-order and High-order questions is necessary during training sessions. It is important for coaches to understand both types of questions and to apply them appropriately. Use of high order questions will provide athletes more opportunities for self-evaluation.

To use guided discovery effectively, the coach guides (facilitates) the players through effective age appropriate questioning to discovery. Here are some examples of guided questioning:

- Why didn't that pass work? So, how should we do it this time?
- How can we get the ball to the other side of the field?
- Why is it important for you to lift your head up when you have the ball?

Along with asking guided questions, coaches need to provide positive responses. Here are some examples:

- Great....so how could we do it faster?
- I like that answer...what other skill can we use to get the ball to our teammates?
- Now you're getting the idea! Where could you position yourself so that you could see both the player you are defending as well as the ball?

"Why Small-Sided Games?"

What does "Small-Sided Games" mean? These are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer players are sharing one ball.

All ages can play "Small Sided Games", but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger soccer players. US Youth Soccer recommendations for "number of players" at the various age groups are as follows:

U6 – U8 | 4 against 4 no goal keepers

U9 & U10 | 7 against 7 including goal keepers

U11 & U12 | 9 against 9 including goal keepers

U13+ | 11 against 11 including goal keepers

Here are some of the reasons why we believe, as soccer coaches, administrators and parents must guarantee that our young soccer players play small-sided games:

1. Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become *more skillful* with it! (Individual technical development)
2. Because we want our young soccer players to make *more, less-complicated decisions* during the game! (Tactical development)
3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically *efficient* in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)
4. Because we want our young soccer players to have more *individual teaching time* with the coach! Fewer players on the field and fewer players on the team will guarantee this! (Need to feel worthy and need to feel important)
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more, involved playing time* in the game! (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball!* (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
7. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more opportunities to score goals* (Pure excitement)

8. Because we want to include children of all temperaments, assertive to shy, to have more opportunities to interact with others and the game! (Socialization)

These are the reasons why we adults must foster "Small-Sided Games" in our youth soccer programs. The "Small-Sided" environment is a *developmentally appropriate environment* for our young soccer players. It's a FUN environment that *focuses on the young soccer player*.

It just makes sense doesn't it?

Creating the Right Environment:

What will be the most effective *environment* for your players to develop in?

This will be the difference between the retention and the drop-off of rates in our soccer programs

We are the on a whole, the first impression of the game of soccer and if we make it a positive and enjoyable one we will;

1. Develop a love for the game of soccer
2. Engage all of our players in our practices
3. Retain participation

If we get the '**environment**' right, the rest will follow. The environment we create has many contributing factors ranging from the organization to the enthusiasm of the coach. We will all have unique styles and approaches to coaching which is the joy of coaching, but there is a number of **FUND**amental guidelines in which we could all adhere to;

- Ensuring practices are planned - Strengths and weaknesses of players/team
- Enthuse and relate to our audience - Relate practices to social influences
- Try to teach more than just the game of soccer through soccer for example: Team Work, Social interaction
- Give clear and concise information
- Challenge players within practice
- Support and develop each player as individuals

Take time to think and understand what environment your players would best work and develop in.

<i>Fun</i>	<i>Structured</i>	<i>Creative</i>	<i>Game Related</i>	<i>Conditioned Scrimmages</i>
<i>Story Telling</i>	<i>Skill Development</i>	<i>Player Centered</i>	<i>Fact Finding</i>	<i>Guided Discovery</i>
<i>Challenging</i>	<i>Dynamic</i>	<i>Positive Reinforcement</i>	<i>High Intensity</i>	