

Sun Prairie Soccer Club (SPSC)

Coaches' Manual



Section I

FAQ

What does it mean to coach Kinderball? It means getting outside, kicking a ball around and having a blast with the kids. More importantly, it also means that you are donating your time to the children of this community. SPSC happens to believe that soccer is an excellent sport for young children in that it keeps them active, it keeps them involved and provides a wonderful social environment.

No really, what does it mean to coach Kinderball? One short (45 minute) practice in addition to a game each week. You might want to throw in an end of the season party. All coaches will need to take the three-hour MAYSA YI License before the season, if they have not done so already. This YI license ensures a background check for all volunteers and provides a few fun coaching tricks to make your job a little easier.

What is the philosophy of the Kinderball program? Fun.

What do you mean “fun?” We want these kids running around with soccer balls at their feet and smiles on their faces. While they are smiling, we want them to enjoy positive social interactions with the other kids and build confidence on and off the soccer field.

I never played soccer before. How am I supposed to teach these kids? The YI License is an excellent start, but, really, Kinderball is so much less about the soccer and more about the joy. No heavy lifting; the stuff you need to teach the kids about soccer could fit on a postage stamp. To make things especially easy, this manual comes with a bunch of soccer “games” that kids are guaranteed to love.

Some of our best Kinderball coaches have never played the game of soccer. The one thing that makes them special is that they can connect with the kids. A little creativity, thoughtfulness and patience are helpful, too.

I am a busy person. Do I really have the time to do this? Roughly two hours a week for eight weeks, throw in the YI Clinic and a quick party, and you will donate around twenty hours to the kids. That’s probably less time than you devoted to watching the Packers last autumn.

Section II

The Kinderball Kid

The active intelligence and creative capacity of a six year old child is light years ahead of our own. A Kinderball kid may not know how to balance a check-book, but at this point in her life she is learning faster and with greater efficiency than the average college professor.

Foster their creativity! Give them activities that allow them to express themselves and challenge their electric minds. Let them play with the ball in any manner that they like, let them try new things and let them ask strange questions that only have odd answers. Let them be kids.

Characteristics of a U6 Child

Limited Attention Span: Unless your instruction is short, simple and lively, their creative minds will wander. They are good for around fifteen seconds of listening and about ten to fifteen minutes for a fun activity.

Focused on Themselves: Reality is solely based on what they see and feel. They rarely consider the world from another's perspective. Sort of like little Donald Trumps without the taut, silvery hair.

Very Sensitive: Take it easy on these kids. When you must correct them, do it with care. Give them something positive to focus on, a better path to take. If they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a great quality, so be supportive of their enthusiasm.

Basic Coordination: Bumbling and tumbling, here and there. Most don't know their left foot from their right and will trip on both, which is nice since many enjoy falling down for no particular reason. They have two speeds: Super-duper fast and stop!

Unaware of Game Scores: Ha! Not really. We don't keep tally in Kinderball and we suggest that you remain conveniently forgetful when asked by the children.

Enjoy Playing, Not Watching: Very important. We want the kids playing as much as possible, not standing in lines or running wind-sprints.

Section III

The Rules of Kinderball

Object of the Game of Soccer: Players attempt to get the soccer ball into the opponents' net without using their hands or arms.

The Object of Kinderball: Fun, Learning, Sportsmanship and Confidence Building, which are all far more important than putting the ball in the back of the net.

Core Kinderball Rules:

1. Players on field per team: Four (4 versus 4.)
2. **No Goalies!**
3. Length of Game: 2 20-minute halves, five minute half-time.
4. Ball Size: 3
5. Player Equipment: **SHIN GUARDS are mandatory!** No jewelry, necklaces, rings or bracelets of any kind. If it looks like dangerous apparel, don't let them wear it! Otherwise, children may wear soft rubber SOCCER cleats or sneakers.
6. **Coaches referee the games (1 coach per team on the field at a time).**
7. **Each child plays at least 50% of the game, if at all possible.**

SPSC Club Kinderball Rules:

1. **No Throw-Ins, Goal Kicks or Corner Kicks (at first).** Players, parents and coaches just kick the ball in when it goes out of bounds – keep the ball and kids moving. Near the

middle/end of the season, we start to introduce throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks to get the kids ready for U8.

2. **Fouls and Dangerous Play.** In general, it is a foul any time a player knocks another player off the ball without first making contact with the ball. Give the ball to the offended team in some manner that is to their advantage, even if this means an easy goal. Anytime a player is in a vulnerable position on the field (e.g. lying on the ground near the ball) it is considered a “dangerous play.” Anything that looks the slightest bit dangerous, stop play to make sure everyone is okay. Then kick the ball back into play.
3. **Children may not stand in the Goal on defense.** Children are smart; they will figure out that if all four players stand in front of the goal, nobody can score. Encourage the kids to play out in the field and not stay back in the goal area.
4. **Absolutely NO POSITIONS.** Do not assign positions to any of your players. Let them run wild, let them be creative. If you have any questions about this important rule, please see the Kinderball Director.
5. **Blowouts!** If the game is clearly becoming a blowout, allow the team on the short end an extra player or two or three; throw out a couple balls or three; switch a dominant player to the other team. Don’t let one side get demoralized.

Section IV

Game & Practice Times

Games are played Saturday mornings. Depending on the number of teams in the league, game times may rotate each. See the game schedule on the website for times and locations of games.

Teams are encouraged to hold one practice a week. Practice times aren't mandated, so feel free to choose a day/time that is convenient for you and your players. Teams are encouraged to not practice on the actual game fields to help avoid further wear and tear of the fields. If you need assistance conducting a practice, contact the In-House Director at inhousedirector@sunprairiesoccer.com to get in touch with some of our volunteer "counselor" coaches.

You may begin practicing as soon as you receive your equipment. First practices also serve as a team meeting for you to introduce players, work out a snack schedule, find parent volunteers to help out during practices and games, etc. ... plus have some fun for your players.

Weather Effects: The In-House Director will decide if games are canceled due to weather. If lightning occurs, all practices and games are cancelled. If your game is canceled, please coordinate with the other coach on a place and time to replay that game. You may decide to replay the game in place of a practice.

Section V
Equipment & Uniforms

Each child will receive a colorful t-shirt, shorts, socks, and their own soccer ball (to keep).

Each head coach will be assigned the following equipment at the beginning of the season:

- A. Soccer Bag
- B. Eight (8) Size 3 Soccer Balls
- C. First Aid Kit
- D. Twenty (20) Disc Cones
- E. Four (4) Cones
- F. Four (4) Pinnies

All this equipment must be returned at the end of the season.

There are a few other useful tools a coach might want to purchase on her own.

- A. **Whistle.** You should be able to command your team without a whistle, but if you'd like to be shrill, a whistle comes in handy.
- B. **Sun Block.** Some parent will forget, you will remember, and some kid won't get melanoma.
- C. **Bug Spray.** Some years this is essential. Other years, not so much.
- D. **Cell Phone:** To call 911 in case of serious injury.

Section VI
The Parents

You should hold a team meeting at the beginning of the season to introduce yourself and your assistant coach to the parents. Delay the first practice fifteen minutes to go over the essentials.

What are the essentials?

Team manager: Who will be in charge of snacks? Who will run the phone tree for cancellations? Who will organize the end of the season party? Kindly ask a parent to be your manager.

Food Allergies or Medical Conditions: Ask parents about the health of their children. Who is allergic to peanut butter? Good to know for after-game snacks. Who needs an asthma sprayer?

Practices and Games: Hand out a schedule for games. When and where do you plan to have your practice during the week? Children should arrive at the field at least five minutes before practice and ten minutes before the game.

Soccer balls: Make sure that the parents know that their children must bring their soccer balls to each practice. A shortage of soccer balls at a practice means that the kids will otherwise not

get to “touch” the ball as much. Also make sure to tell the parents to **keep the soccer balls inflated.**

You are NOT a babysitter: Some parents will drop their kids off at the first practice and speed away to some other activity. If you don't nip this in the bud, before long, every parent will abandon you to the mercy of the children. Then some kid will get hurt or need to go the bathroom or wander into the street, and then you might as well flush your practice down the toilet. The parents should know from day one that you are a coach, not a baby sitter. At least two parents other than the coaches must be at every practice to take care of any emergency or secondary situations.

Shin Guards: Children must wear shin guards at games and practices.

Water Bottles: Children should have a water bottle to keep them hydrated.

Get Emails!: If you have everybody's email, they you are sitting pretty for team-wide communications. Expect some parents not to have an email address, so please be sensitive to this fact.

Section VII Coaches and Parental Rules of Conduct

Parents should know the following ABSOLUTE club rules, which are self-evident to most, but need to be made abundantly clear. Any violation of the following requires immediate action that may necessitate contact with the police.

1. **No physical mistreatment** of anybody, including own child.
2. **No inappropriate touching** of anybody, including own child.
3. **No verbal mistreatment** of anybody, including own child.
4. **No Smoking** anywhere near the children.
5. **No alcohol or illicit drug consumption** anywhere near the children.
6. **No inappropriate commentary, swearing or statements** near the children.

Section VIII Injury

Do not fool around with injuries. Call an ambulance if a situation appears serious. Use common sense, but err heavily on the side of caution.

Coaches will be provided with basic first aid kits that are useful for the most common and most minor injuries.

If a child loses consciousness at any time, he or she may not return to the game or practice and should see a physician immediately. Remember that a child does not necessarily have to lose consciousness in order to have suffered a concussion.

If an injury appears minor, use your first aid kit and take your time to evaluate the scope of the injury. If you are unsure, then assume that the injury is serious and take appropriate actions.

If an injury appears to be related to the neck and/or spine, do not move the child. Call for help immediately.

Section IX The Practice

We suggest you hold one practice a week (forty-five minutes). **If there is a hint of lightning, practice is off.**

Practice is **optional** for the children at this age. Do not “punish” children with reduced playing time because they cannot or will not make practice; however, it is appropriate for parents to alert you to when their children will not be at a practice or a game.

Remember that there should be no intentional HEADING activities at the Kinderball level. UW Pediatricians recommend that children do not start such activities until after 4th Grade.

The Kinderball practice can be frustrating and chaotic at times. If you are somebody who likes constant structure in your life, be prepared for the random giggling fits, spontaneous wrestling matches and general oddities of a Kinderball practice. How are you suppose to keep a flock of zany six-year olds in control while at the same time fostering their creativity, nurturing their spirits and teaching them a little something about soccer?

Preparation: Pick five or six five-minute activities for your practice that involve the use of a soccer ball. Don’t worry about teaching specific elements of soccer. The planned activities should be fun games that involve a soccer ball. The soccer ball should be considered a “toy”. Make sure your activity-based games emphasize exploration and experimentation with the rolling, spinning and bouncing activities of the soccer ball.

Creativity: You can take almost any childhood game and turn it into a productive soccer activity. Take “Tag” for example. Instead of hands, make them “tag” the other player by passing their ball into another kid’s ball. This will teach ball handling, passing accuracy and evasion skills. You can take any soccer activity and add your own unique twist to make it fun and interesting.

Flexibility: During practice, some activities may need a little tweaking or may need to be abandoned altogether. Have the confidence to change things for the better. No matter your “practice” plan, you should have “back-up” activities you can go to at any moment in case your initial plans go awry. (Scrimmage is always a great back-up!)

Keep your Good Humor: Most of the time, it will be hard to sand-blast the smile off your face when you are coaching these little fireballs. On those rare occasions when the children have shed their angel wings, you must be able to keep your wits and your good humor. Your mood will dictate the tempo of the practice. Keep things light, keep things simple and have a good time.

Section X
Player Evaluations

With so many kids playing soccer it can be difficult to maintain competitive balance across teams when team assignments are somewhat arbitrary. For this reason, we have instituted a “player rating” system to try to add a bit more science to building next season’s teams. Coaches will be ask to complete a “player rating” for each of their players at the end of the season. The system involves simply identifying the “level” of play each player possesses. Here is an example:

1. **Beginner:** Not very engaged in the game. If a ball is kicked to them, they will try to kick it, but they generally do not initiate involvement. Often require direction to participate in play.
2. **Developing:** Generally engaged with what is going on in the game, but does not yet possess the skills/confidence to be proactive on the field.
3. **Improving:** Always engaged with what is going on in the game and beginning to develop the skills/aggressiveness to dictate play.
4. **Competent:** Usually aggressive and often can dictate the flow of play but has not developed the ball skills and/or awareness of strategy to dominate play.
5. **Advanced:** Has developed the awareness and skills to dictate/dominate play.