

Suggestions and Ideas For a Successful Season of Soccer at GCAA

Introduction

My name is Jeff Martin, and I have been involved with GCAA soccer since January of 2007. I have been the Rec Chairperson since May of 2008. Since my involvement with GCAA began I have completed several coaches classes (including the NCYSA Youth Module I, Youth Module II, and "E" License courses as well as the State Diploma with NSCAA).

I coach for several reasons. First, I enjoy interacting with children. I have 3 boys of my own and have been very active in their lives. When my oldest decided to start playing soccer I saw this as a great opportunity to be involved in a positive way. I could help teach him about team sports, including teamwork, sportsmanship, exercise, healthy competition, and one day he may be able to look back and appreciate my work in the community as a volunteer. If and when my younger children get move involved with soccer, I will likely try to help with them as well.

I also coach for the same reason that many of our other coaches are coaching too... to ensure the opportunity for my child (and the other children in the community) to participate in sports at a local community organization. Without volunteer coaches, GCAA could not exist.

I have coached kids from U06 through U12. I help with training other coaches and with soccer camps that we host at our organization. I believe that I am a good coach, but I know that I can always get better and continue to try to improve my skills as a coach.

When I started coaching I knew the very basics of the game since I had played periodically throughout my life. I was never a highly skilled player; I only played at a club or rec level. However, I did enjoy the game. So when I started coaching, I knew I needed help. The good thing was that help was easy to find. It just took a little bit of time and effort on my part. I found several soccer videos to watch, I watched and talked to other coaches and asked questions, I read (and continue to read) info on websites, and sometimes I just get creative and make up some of my own things. I also continue to read the NCYSA newsletters which provide coaching tips. I'm always looking for opportunities to help me throughout each season.

So, some of the things I'm going to share with you are what help me prepare for the season, get through it, and finish it off. Remember, I am just like you... a volunteer. I am not an expert or professional. I've just had a few years of experience now and have taken some opportunities to get some training. These are just some things I've picked up, learned, and tweaked, as the seasons

progressed that have really helped me. My hope is that you will take the time to review these, make any tweaks to help personalize them for you, and then follow through. A few key things will make you a better coach and more appreciated by your players and their parents: a positive and fun attitude, communication, organization, and preparation.

- 1) Preseason Checklist... *“What you do in the preseason sets the mood for the rest of the season.”*
 - a) attend the coaches meeting
 - b) attend the draft
 - c) attend the coaches training
 - d) show up and help on field work day
- 2) Initial Contact with Parents and Players... *“Make your first impression a good one.”*
- 3) Your first practice and player/parent meeting... *“Set the tone and your expectations for the rest of the season.”*
- 4) Practices... *“This is where soccer players are taught.”*
- 5) Games... *“This is where soccer players show what they were taught.”*
- 6) End of season

1) Preseason Checklist

- a) At the beginning of each season we have a preseason coaches meeting. Attendance at this meeting is considered mandatory. As an organization we are dependent on you as a volunteer and this is our one and only opportunity to have all coaches in the same place at the same time. We use this time to provide you with key information for the season, go over any procedural or rule changes, set expectations for the season, and give you the opportunity to ask any questions. Attending this meeting is the first step to making your time as coach much easier.
- b) Next, if your league holds a draft (typically U10 and up teams), plan to attend to pick your team. This is a time for you to meet other coaches from your league and to see a majority of the players in your league. Then you will get a chance to pick the players that you will coach for the season. If you are not in a league that drafts, plan to attend to provide assistance. There are always jobs that need to be done on draft day and the more help we have, the smoother it goes. Occasionally you may be asked to even fill in and pick a team for a coach who had a scheduling conflict and was unable to attend. This is your chance to practice for when you decide to coach in a league that does require a draft.
- c) Attending the coaches training is VERY important. This is your chance to get some league specific instructions. We go over rules and our goals for your league. We spend some time talking about the “psychology of your league” (i.e. the characteristics of the players in your league and how to reach them on their level). We typically spend about 45 minutes inside for classroom time

and then we spend another 45 minutes or so out on the field providing very specific and useful drills that you can put to use even in your very first practice. This training is often critical to you being a successful coach, especially if you have not had any previous formal training as a coach. And for those who have had the training... you know that you can always learn something new or different at every training event

- d) We gotta have a place to play! Before each season can begin we must prepare our playing areas. Fields must be laid out and lined. Bleachers and benches must be properly placed. Goals must be re-assembled, nets attached, and then placed. And all trash must be picked up. Fields need to be walked to search for glass and rocks and anything else that will make play unsafe. The more people we have helping, the easier this day goes. These tasks usually take several hours to complete so even if you can't be there when we start, plan to show up when you can. This is also a good time to meet other coaches and parents from your league. Bring you kids and teach them that this is their facility and they need to help maintain it too. If they have to help take care of it, they will have more pride in it as well.

2) Initial Contact with Parents and Players

First impressions go a long way. Starting the season successfully begins with proper communication to the parents of your players. Most coaches like to start with an email to introduce themselves as the coach and then welcome them and their child to the team. This is a great way to begin. If you don't already have them, be sure to get the names of the parents and verify email addresses. This will serve you later on when communication continues. Inform them of your first practice day, time, and location (provide directions if necessary). Also, inform them that there will be a brief player/parent meeting at the conclusion of your first practice. Also tell them that after you talk to all the parents, you will send a follow-up email going over what you just talked about and some other important information as it pertains to the start of the season. Even if the players are returning from a previous season, be sure to include them in the email. It lets the parents know as a coach, you're looking forward to the season. Nothing reassures a parent more than a coach who is excited about soccer and coaching their child. You should ask that all parents reply to your email by a certain date to confirm receipt, if any parent does not reply then you should follow up with a phone call. During that call, you should confirm email address, indicate that email is your primary means of communication (unless you prefer to call everyone on your team), and stress the importance of checking email regularly to keep up with the soccer season.

See Addendum 1 for a checklist that you may use when writing that first email.

3) Your First Practice and Player/Parent Meeting

Even though it will be your first practice. Setting the proper tone and expectations are very important. However, before you even step on the field, there are some key things you need to have done.

- a) First decide what you want your players to call you. Keep in mind, especially for the younger ages, some parents teach their kids to address adults in a certain manner (meaning they don't allow their kids to refer to adults strictly by their first names... most go with Mr. Jeff or Mr. Martin for example.). Typically I ask that my players call me "Coach", "Coach Jeff", or if they must "Coach Martin". And to make the soccer field completely level for all players, my own kids even call me "Coach Jeff" on the field. Believe it or not, it makes them feel like more of a member of the team and their teammates treat them the same as all of the other kids too. And my kids get a kick out of calling me that anyway.

- b) Unfortunately, GCAA is not in the financial position to provide any practice supplies. GCAA will provide each team with a game ball. We encourage you to reserve it for use in games only, and then to hold on to it and use it next season as another practice ball when you return to coach. In U04 each season every child is provided with a size 3 ball. They should bring it to every practice. And if they keep up with it, will be able to use the same ball for several seasons. The size 3 ball is used in U04, U06, and U08.

So, you need to determine what supplies you are willing to personally provide and what supplies you will rely on other parents to bring. A basic set of coaching supplies will include the following:

1. a whistle
2. a stopwatch (or watch with a time and/or countdown feature)
3. some small disc cones (at least 8... more is better)
4. some size appropriate soccer balls (can never have too many)
5. some pinnies (net jerseys or colored t-shirts)
6. a first aid kit

These are the basics. There are plenty of other things that you could use, but I have found (as do most other coaches) that these supplies are sufficient in Rec soccer.

- c) Before the first practice, you need to come up with a practice plan. This first practice is a good time to do some basic and advanced drills to help you assess skills of your players and how well they can follow instructions. You can also determine the level of complexity they can handle. So before you show up for practice, determine what drills will you use to warm your players up, what drills you can use to assess their abilities, and what drills can help you determine their soccer practice intellect. Remember, some of the drills will answer multiple questions for you.

So for your first practice, be sure to show up about 20 to 30 minutes early to get set up. As players arrive, you can introduce yourself (by your preferred name that you already decided) and get them immediately involved with some activity that you can continue to add new players to as they arrive. You could have cones set up and ask them to practice dribbling around them. You can pair up players as they come in. Have them practice passing to each other or they can play keep-away. The important thing with the younger ones is to get them playing since waiting just causes their attention span to falter. They may be a little shy at first, but if you can grab their attention right away and get them active, you will be more successful.

You should start your official practice right on time... even if everyone is not there yet. Parents and players must see and understand that you will not wait on them. If practice is scheduled to start at 6 PM, then start at 6 PM. Those who arrive late will just have to join in as you go.

Go through your practice plan that you designed before practice began. If something is not working, be flexible and creative and make changes on the fly or simply skip to the next activity. Some drills simply don't work with some players and teams. Be sure to save a few minutes at the end for your parent/team meeting.

When having this meeting, I try to make it brief and to the point. I like to cover information with the players and then follow it with information for the parents. Obviously, this wouldn't apply for the younger ones. Player information may include items such as what to bring to practices (always wear their proper shoes, always wear their shin guards, always bring water for practices and games, always bring their soccer ball, etc.), listening to the coaches and respecting their teammates, important to be at practices and games on time, and anything else you'd like to tell your players. Telling this directly to the children reinforces their responsibilities in participating in the sport.

Parent information may include items such as needing to know if their child is on any medication or have any medical conditions that may hinder their play, any food allergies for after-game snacks, practice/game times and schedules, how to tell you when they will not be at practice or games, GCAA website information, and anything else you'd like to tell your parents. I usually hand out a sheet that explains who I am, what they can expect from me, what I expect of them, and what I expect of their kids. This is also the time to recruit any assistant coaches (who MUST complete a background check and be approved by GCAA before serving in this capacity) and any team parents (primarily responsible for getting the after-game snacks organized). If you need some help purchasing some practice equipment, you may request that at this time too.

And finally you will want to re-iterate the importance of team sponsorships. This money is used by GCAA to help maintain the fields, buy soccer equipment, pay for basic utility needs, provide scholarship opportunities for some players, and other costs that are not covered by the registration cost of each player. All money is gladly accepted and put to good use in our organization. Ask that they talk to their friends and families to find money that we can use.

See Addendum 2 for a sample letter that I hand out to each parent on my team at the beginning of each season. Feel free to edit it for your specific team and level.

4 - Practices

Try to be the first to arrive for your practice. I like to be there at least 20 minutes before the players are scheduled to arrive. This gives me time to set up my practice area. I put cones where I need them, I place soccer balls and pinnies where they will be needed, and I review my practice plan. As the players arrive, greet them and get immediately involved in an activity. This is usually the best time to have them concentrating on footwork. This is mostly an individual activity and something that cannot be practiced enough. Give them specific moves or techniques to work on (inside of foot, outside of foot, cuts, pullbacks, scissors, cruyff, matthews, etc.) If you are not certain of these skills [Click Here](#) for a youtube video of some examples (or go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvDn6428bX8>). You can search youtube for many other good examples too.

During this warm-up time players often like to take shots on goal, but be sure it's supervised as sometimes a player can get hurt when a "goalie" is getting blasted at by several players shooting.

Try getting a ball and dribbling with them or get them into some open space and pass with them. As more players arrive, have a couple players grab pinnies, and play a game of keep away. This is not only fun, but they are playing soccer, dribbling, passing, and communicating. Join in if you want, and if you're lucky, they will do this on their own.

Three suggestions to a good practice and why;

1. Have plenty of soccer balls! There is always a player or two who will forget their ball. A good example is when scrimmaging and a ball gets kicked across the field or worse, in the woods or over a fence. As a coach you want to be able to toss another ball in right away to keep play going. You don't want players standing around waiting for another player to go look for it. Players shouldn't have to chase balls during an activity, the assistant coach or team parent can help with this. Also, stray balls can be gathered by the coaches while players are taking a water break. Or, right before a water break, have them chase the loose balls and dribble them back to a set spot.

2. Colored cones. These are for setting up practice grids and play areas. Different colors help determine different play areas depending on what activity you're working on. A tip here is to set up your cones in such a way that as practice progresses, you remove what you don't need, so at the end, you end up with a large playing area for scrimmaging. This minimizes set up during actual practice.
3. Practice pinnies for at least half the team. Although it's probably a good idea to have 2 sets of pinnies (2 different colors) because some kids may feel left out if they don't get to wear one. This is for small sided games and scrimmaging. Plus, during practices it's easier to separate your players by color than by names. Have the players put these on as they arrive for practice. If you don't want to invest in actual pinnies, you or one of your team parents can buy some oversized t-shirts or shirts that stretch and can dye them at home. You can make your own "pinnies" for about \$1 each this way.

Practices, in most cases, should not require more than half of your normal playing field and do not require a goal. For example, if you have 10 players on your team, you scrimmage 5v5 across half a field. Smaller fields reduce space, increase pressure, and allow for more touches on the ball.

Typically, practices should not last longer than a game. For example;

U04 games are 20 minutes, so actual practice should not last much longer.
U06 games are 32 minutes, so actual practice should not last much longer.
U08 games are 48 minutes, so actual practice should not last much longer.
U10 games are 50 minutes, so actual practice should not last much longer.
U12 games are 60 minutes, so actual practice should not last much longer.
U15 games are 90 minutes, so actual practice should not last much longer.
Of course, when you add in water breaks a practice could go about 10 to 15 minutes over these game times. This is OK, but keep track of time and stay on task. This is why you need a stopwatch or timer.

A typical practice format can be as follows with times varying depending on your age group;

- Fundamental warm up's / Individual skills and activities
- Match related activity / Small group activities
- Match related activity / Large group activities
- Match condition game / Scrimmaging
- Cool down

Remember to avoid the “three L’s” in practice:

Lectures - Do not lecture your players. Instructions are to be brief and to the point and on their level. Tell them in less than 20 seconds and get them off and going. As they start the activity, if they are doing something incorrectly demonstrate it and keep the activity moving. Also be sure to give plenty of encouragement to them and praise them when they do something correctly. An example of how to handle a player who isn't making accurate passes, would be, “Great job dribbling past your opponent and you got a great strike on the ball when passing it, but let's work on your accuracy to improve your passing. Try to pass the ball how you would like to have it passed to you.” Also, be sure to demonstrate, or better yet, let one of your other players demonstrate the proper techniques. Sometimes players need to be shown how to do it and then they can imitate what they saw.

Laps – Players should not run laps. Especially for “poor performance” or punishment. Besides, if you're a coach with limited experience like me, you may find it difficult to perform the skills yourself that you are trying to teach. If you think your players need conditioning (which is VERY RARE at these ages) then do drills that keep them moving with a ball at their feet. There are all kinds of activities that will help condition the player AND improve their soccer skills at the same time!!!

Lines – Minimize standing in lines. But, lines are sometimes required for activities such as shooting on goal or relay races. Try to create enough positions in a drill so that each line never has more than 2 or 3 people in it waiting for their turn.

If what you're working on doesn't seem to be getting across to the kids or they just aren't into a particular game, move on or take a water break. Be flexible!!!

Try to end your practice ON TIME. After practice is the time to talk about what you've worked on. Let the players talk and ask questions. Communicate things like where the next game is, what time it starts, and to arrive early. By this time, the parents are ready to leave so keep it brief.

5 - Games

What did your players learn in practice? Think about kids in school... when they take tests do the teachers try to tell them how to solve the problems on the test? No, they let the kids show what they know and have learned. Games are like tests and are not the time to instruct, they are the time for you to observe and make notes (on paper or mentally) of what skills you need to work on in the next practice. In practice you will want to try to recreate game situations and show what the players did, and then make a suggestion, or better yet, ask the players what they could have done that may have had a greater chance of succeeding.

Try to be the first to show up for a game so you can get prepared. Normally you should try to arrive at least 15 minutes before your scheduled game time. I often try to arrive about 30 minutes early. As the players begin to arrive, find an open area (that will not interfere with any games that are currently happening) and have them working on dribbling and passing. This is more important at the older ages (U08 and above), since these kids need some warm-up time and are expected to be a little more skilled at soccer. As your players arrive, have them check their laces and shin guards, remove any jewelry or forbidden hair clips, and tuck in their jerseys. In U10 and up, you may make it a team rule that whichever players arrive first will get to start the game. This is a good incentive for players to arrive early because they all want to play right away.

It is a good idea to have a stopwatch during the game to keep track of time. In the younger leagues (U04, U06, and U08) you must have one since you also serve as the ref during the game. In the older groups, keeping track of time helps you to know when to sub and equalize playing time as much as possible. You will have players that never want to be subbed, and this is a way to be as fair as possible.

Tip: Always confirm with the ref the length of the halves before the game begins! Not all clubs always play the same length games.

At halftime, gather the entire team and make a few comments about what is happening during the game. Do not single out players, but focus on what to work on as far as the team goes, offense and/or defense. Ask them if they noticed anything in particular that a teammate should be aware of. Halftime is very short so limit your comments and give the players a minute or so to get something to drink and talk amongst themselves. Keep it brief, don't lecture or yell at them. Think positive and offer basic tips not specific instructions... again, you will have time to go work on some of these things in your next practice.

After the game, make certain that they thank and congratulate the other team. It is also a good show of sportsmanship for them to thank the refs. You should also take the time to thank and congratulate the opposing coach (setting a good example by action). Gather your players together. I like to get them in a circle, with everyone facing each other and have a brief discussion about the game. Have your team parent hand out the snacks. As a coach, focus on the positive aspects of the game. Don't worry about the mistakes or problems... let the kids go home happy about the game. If they "lost" (had a lower score) they need to be encouraged and have the positive things highlighted. With a loss, some kids will be dejected regardless of what is said and some will be happy regardless of the outcome of the game. We want to teach the kids that they can go home happy and come back and play another day. Wins and losses don't matter at this level. We only want to improve. Be sure to let your players do some of the talking. Here are some examples of what to do for your aftergame chat;

- If your team has won – Ask each player to say something positive about the game, what they think they could have done better, or what they think a teammate did well. This is good because, just because they won, it doesn't mean there aren't things to improve on.
- If your team has lost – Ask each player to say something positive about the game, what they think other teammates did well, or what they noticed the other team was doing that worked. This is good because, just because they lost, it doesn't mean there weren't things that didn't go well.
- If your team has lost by a landslide – Tell your team it's OK, it happens to every team and that the most important thing is that you all played your best and didn't give up. Your parents and coaches are proud of the way you played no matter what the score. This gets more difficult the older the players get.

Remember, the games should be fun. They should still be about improving skills for each individual player in all positions. So that means you need to put players in positions that they may not be as strong at. If you have a player that can score at will and only likes playing offense, then challenge them by putting them in defense too. Make them learn to attack an offensive player, get the ball, and make that pass that leads to other players scoring. No player needs to have a specialized position at this age. They need to learn to play in all positions... this includes Goalie. Even if you have a player that will let in a dozen goals, play them in goal. They need to get experience and can only improve if they practice.

6 – End of Season

Remember, what you do at the end of the season is up to you and your team. Please know that anything you do as a volunteer coach is appreciated. Many teams like to have pizza party or a have a cook-out at the end of the season. Regardless of what you decide your time and effort throughout the season is very much appreciated by all.

In Rec Soccer, GCAA does not provide trophies to give out to players. We made this change in the Fall of 2008 and it was not a popular decision for many parents. However, as we have gotten further away from this decision, the passion has settled a bit and people are starting to understand why this decision was made.

As a committee we want to support ALL of the kids in our soccer program. When trophies were given out before, they were done so in such a way that made some kids very happy and then some kids were completely heart-broken and disappointed. In the younger leagues (U04 and U06) a participation trophy was

given to every player. This was fine for most kids in the group except when they had an older sibling that did not get a trophy. In the older leagues (U08 and up) trophies were only given to the “best” team (i.e. the team that won the most games that season). Scores and standings were kept for these purposes. And since most coaches wanted their kids to be the ones that got the trophies, they really wanted to win at any cost. This caused us to see many displays of poor sportsmanship, limited playing times by the less skilled players, and a huge focus on scoring and winning only. There was no time to focus on player development. Many times, players did not get “permission” to fully participate... their job was always to get the ball as quickly as possible to the one or two players on the team that could score. Less skilled players were “hidden” on the field in “out of the way” positions. Too much was at stake to take a chance on a questionable player. Parents were more highly charged at games and we saw arguments between parents, coaches, and refs. The adults were setting very poor examples for the kids. Our soccer committee was saddened to see our program continue to spiral down this path. We feared that if this continued, we would become one of those organizations that you read about where parents get into a physical fight and someone could be seriously injured or worse. So we decided it was time to make some serious changes for the sake of the kids.

Our first step was to remove the pressure of winning by no longer officially keeping score or standings. Sure the kids know how to keep score, but the adults are encouraged to ignore and not comment about score. For example, if my players say something about winning or spouting off the score, I always say something like, “Well, I think we won because we made some great passes, we had fun, and we tried our best.” I can say that at the end of every game regardless of score. Eventually the kids start to buy into it, and they are happy to play and to get better. They go home happy regardless of score and they want to come back and play again as soon as possible. Somebody was proud of them for trying their best and having fun and kids like to please others... especially adults.

Since we took away scores and standings there was no good way of giving out trophies other than giving every kid a participation trophy. We did consider this but really felt that this was sending the wrong message to the kids. We want them to play soccer because they enjoy it. We want them to try to improve because they think the game is fun and want to be better at it. We DON'T want them only playing so that they can collect a piece of plastic at the end of the season. I know that sounds harsh, but we want the game to be the reward. I play golf (not very well) because I enjoy it and want to get better. The game is the reward. We want all of our kids to learn that participation in RECREATIONAL sports is fun and rewarding. They don't need a trophy to tell them that... I promise.

With that being said, some teams still choose to buy and hand out their own trophies. We do not forbid this, but we do try to discourage it for the above reasons. Again, this is a decision between you and your parents. At GCAA we

are trying to create a positive sports environment for all players and want to help teach more than winning and losing and materialistic winnings.

We do hand out a sponsor t-shirt to every child and each head coach at the end of the season. These shirts list all of the major sponsors from that season on the back. This provides a little extra exposure for these generous businesses that support GCAA. They also serve as a simple reminder for all of the kids of the fun times they had that season playing soccer. The kids love wearing the shirts to school and it provides an instant connection and a way to bond to the other kids who are also wearing them.

At the end of each season, my team usually meets at a local restaurant for a team dinner. As I hand out the shirts to each player, I like to take a few minutes to say something specific about each or the players. I like to talk about specific things from the season that I remember them doing, what skills they improved, and any positive personality traits they have.

I wrap up the dinner with a thank you to the parents for being supportive though the season and for bringing the kids to the practices and games. I then tell them I hope to see them all back again next season.

As I stated waaaaay back at the beginning of this guide, I'm not a professional coach but I think sharing my experiences with you could help you prepare for the season, get through it, and end it positively and most importantly, enjoyably for both you and your team.

Thank you for taking time to read this and I hope you find it helpful. If you have any questions feel free to email me at info@gcaasoccer.com.

Thanks,
Jeff Martin
GCAA Rec Soccer Chairperson

Addendum 1 – First Email Checklist

Hi Everyone,

My name is Jeff Martin and I will be your child's coach for the 2009 Fall season of soccer at GCAA.

Please REPLY to this email so that I know that you got it. I will call any parent that I don't get a reply from to make sure that everyone is checking emails. Email will be my primary way to communicate with you guys this season. If you need to contact me, please try email first. If you don't get a timely response (withing 24 hours or so) please feel free to call my at home at xxx-xxxx between the hours of 10 AM and 10 PM.

We will have two and half weeks of practice before our first game (currently planned for September 12th). Our first practice will be Tuesday, Aug 25th at 6:30PM followed by our second practice on Saturday, the 29th at 10AM. Also, we are scheduled to practice on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend. If a majority of our players will be there then we will plan to practice, otherwise we will skip that 2nd Saturday practice. We can talk about it during our first two practices. Our practices will be held in the open field behind C3 Church and will be about an hour long. Let me know if you are unsure where the field is. Also, please remember to park in the church parking lot and walk to the fields. DO NOT park on the sides of the road.

Our team needs a \$350 team sponsorship donation. If you know anyone that would like to sponsor our team, or donate any amount of money towards the total, please let me know. All donations are tax deductible.

Each player will get a game uniform of a jersey, shorts, and socks. Our team will be Orange this season. Homework for the kids... get them to start thinking about a team name. I will talk to them about it at our first practice. Here's a good listing that you can look at with them to help come up with some name choices:
http://www.nasl.com/articles/team_names.htm

Shin guards are required for every practice and game. Soccer cleats are optional but recommended (no metal cleats or cleats that have toe-cleats like baseball cleats). Also, please have your child bring a size 3 soccer ball to every practice. If you have more than one size 3 soccer ball at home please bring them so our kids have plenty to practice with.

Dick's Sporting Goods has a soccer packages for between \$35 and \$40 that includes cleats, shin guards, and a soccer ball. Also, if you just need cleats, the Adidas Outlet in Smithfield normally has very good deals on cleats.

I'm really looking forward to the start of a new season and will be excited to see the returning faces and the new ones.

If you have any questions, or know of a sponsor, please email me.
Let's have a great season together!!!

Coach Jeff

Addendum 2 – Sample Letter To Parents For First Practice

GCAA U08 Soccer Fall 2009

Player Names	Parent Names
Cara	Angi & Curt
Chandler	Julie & Shawn
Conner	Jeff & Jane
Luke	Scott & Gwen
Mason	John & Kim
Sam	JoEllen & Jay
Sidney	Steve

About the Coach:

Name: Jeff Martin
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Email: jeff@email.com

I am NOT a paid professional! I am simply a volunteer parent, who has a limited knowledge of the game and a desire to help give the kids a chance to have fun. I want them to learn a little bit about the game of soccer and hope to develop in them a love for the game, while trying to teach them (in very simple terms) about team spirit, good sportsmanship, and basic soccer skills (including but not limited to: dribbling the ball, passing, corner kicks, goal kicks, and throw-ins.) The focus is very much about “player development” not keeping score or winning. I want to encourage the kids to be creative with the ball and will do my best to refrain from “over-coaching.” At this age we still focus on the ball as a fun toy, and soccer as a fun game. However we do want to introduce the concept of “shape” on the field (not to be confused with positions... our team will not play position soccer).

Goals for the Season:

- 1) Have FUN! While practice and games will be reasonably organized, we want the kids to enjoy their time on the team.
- 2) Stress the importance of getting along with others.
- 3) Encourage TEAMWORK. The kids are part of a group, and they must work together.
- 4) Develop a sense of sharing. This goes hand in hand with team spirit.
- 5) Learn to play within the rules.
- 6) Done as SAFELY as possible. Soccer, as with most sports, has an exposure to possible injury. We will be prepared to take action if needed.
- 7) There will be very little focus on the score. All players are WINNERS if they play hard and have fun. Playing our best is the real victory in the sport of soccer. There is plenty of time to worry about score when they are much older.

Equipment the Players Need:

- 1) Uniforms will be provided for the games. I will get them handed out as soon as I receive them.
- 2) Shin Guards are MANDATORY for all practices and games.
- 3) Socks MUST cover shin guards completely.
- 4) Shoes: Soccer shoes do give your child a better opportunity to maximize their skill but are NOT required. The designs of soccer shoes tend to be fairly flat across the top of the foot and somewhat pointed at the toe. This allows for better control when striking the ball and allows the player to lift the ball into the air easier. Soccer shoes come in several varieties of cleat styles and patterns. Some are intended for damp or tall grass, some for hard ground, some for turf, and some for indoor courts. Any of these are fine choices as long as there are no metal parts to the cleats. Used soccer shoes can often be found at

Play-It-Again Sports, and as you know children do tend to grow out of shoes very quickly so these used shoes are usually in good shape having only been used for a single season or two. They are also available at Dick's Sporting Goods for about \$20 in most cases.

NO metal spikes are allowed. Also NO shoes with toe cleats (common on baseball and some football cleats). These are dangerous to other children on the soccer field and hinder ball control for the player wearing them.

- 5) Soccer ball: As the coach I will bring my collection of soccer balls to every practice. Every player should also bring their own size 3 soccer ball to practices. The more soccer balls we have at the field, the better.
- 6) All jewelry, including earrings/studs, rings, watches, chains, and metal hair clips must be removed prior to play. Rubber band style hair ties can be used.
- 7) Children wearing glasses must use a secured strap for their glasses.

What I Expect From the Players:

- 1) Play your best at all times and to play half or more of each game.
- 2) Be early or on time to Practice and Games.
- 3) Bring water or sports drink to games and practices.
- 4) Wear your shin guards to all practices and games.
- 5) Play within the rules.
- 6) Show respect and good sportsmanship to your teammates and the opposing team members.
- 7) Have FUN.

What I Expect From the Parents:

- 1) Encourage your players. Do not be critical of them or others (the Coach). I am available after practices to discuss anything; just remember I am learning too!
- 2) Be patient with the players.
- 3) There's only going to be one coach during the games. Your kids are going to want to obey you, as it should be, and that makes coaching difficult when parents are yelling instructions that are different from their coach.
- 4) Get the players to all practices and games early or on time.
- 5) Be positive and enthusiastic. NEVER be critical.
- 6) Have fun and be sociable with other parents, spectators, and participants. Remember these are very young children just playing a game. Enjoy the time outside watching your children having fun. Don't get caught up in the competition.
- 7) Please do your best to inform me in advance if your child will not be able to attend a practice or game.
- 8) Inform a coach or official if there is anything that is unsafe on or off the field.
- 9) Focus on the skills your children are learning and how much fun they're having, not on winning or losing.

What You Can Expect From Me:

- 1) To be positive and enthusiastic. This is just a game and a chance for young kids to have FUN!
- 2) To make sure that each child plays at least half of every game.
- 3) To encourage the children to participate in practice.
- 4) To encourage the children to always try their best.
- 5) To allow the children to develop skills at their own pace.
- 6) To be early or on time to every practice and game.
- 7) To be available after each practice and game for any questions or concerns you may have.

Other General Information:

- 1) I will bring a Game Snack Sign-up Sheet to a practice before the first game. Snacks should be kid friendly and include a drink. Please be aware that some players may have

- siblings at the game that may also want to join in the after-game snack, so bring a few extras.
- 2) Games will be played 4 vs. 4 with no goalie. The field size will be about 25 yards wide and 30 yards long. The two coaches will be the referees for the game.
 - 3) Games will consist of four 12-minute quarters with a 2-minute break between quarters and a 5-minute break at halftime. Always plan to arrive about 20 to 30 minutes before the game so that we can warm up the team. Games tend to last about an hour. Then after the game we have our after-game snack as a team. Plan to be at the field for at least an hour and a half per game.

I want to thank you all for participating in this season's soccer program. I am looking forward to having fun and getting to know each of the players and their families. I will do everything I can to help everyone enjoy this time. With your help we will be able to make it fun for the kids.

Coach Jeff