



LOWER MERION SOCCER CLUB

PROGRAM MANUAL FOR THE MIDDLE INTRAMURAL AGE GROUPS

Bantams Division	-- 6 year old boys
Microns Division	-- 6 year old girls
Juniors Division	-- 7 year old boys
Quasars Division	-- 7 year old girls
Intermediates Division	-- 8 year old boys
Protons Division	-- 8 year old girls

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMS

The Middle Age Divisions are designed to give players a chance to experience soccer and develop their skills through a "team" environment. Many of the players in these divisions played previously in the Atoms Division (5 year old boys) and the Neutrons Division (5 year old girls) which each have a less formal "pick up soccer" atmosphere (players are not assigned to a particular team for the season).

The PRIMARY objective of these programs is to **PROVIDE EACH AND EVERY YOUNGSTER WITH A FUN FILLED EXPERIENCE IN A SOCCER ENVIRONMENT.**

Before the season starts, players are assigned to teams of up to 14 players (12 for the Bantams and Microns). For games, each team will split in half and play two simultaneous games against another team. The games will be played on adjacent fields at the same time. Each team will have a head coach who will be in charge of the team for the entire season. Each team will need an assistant coach to manage one of their two split teams on game day. Each team will have their own unique jersey color and team name to distinguish them from the other teams in the division.

Each team will have one game a week and one practice a week (the exact day and time of the practice will be determined by the head coach). Almost all games will be held on Saturdays. There might be a Sunday afternoon game during the season. The season will start on the first Saturday after Labor Day Weekend (in early September) and continue through the middle of November. Games are 50 minutes long while practices will be about 90 minutes long. Each division is assigned to a specific practice field for the season.

While scores are kept for each game, standings for the season are NOT kept and there is no end of season champion. The program is structured this way in order to keep the competitive level (of players, coaches and ESPECIALLY parents of the players) in perspective and allow coaches to focus on developing the players' soccer skills rather than winning.

Each age group will have a Division Commissioner who will be in charge of assigning players to teams before the start of the season. Every effort will be made to divide the players up as evenly as possible, based on the end of season player evaluations made by the coaches from previous seasons. Car pool / teammate requests will be honored as much as possible.

It is important to remember that the players are only 6 - 8 years old. They are not professional players or players with a lot of soccer experience. Coaches often need to double as child psychologists when dealing with these young players. Players need to be made to feel good about themselves. They should leave every game and every practice with smiles on their faces. Coaches should remember that the main reason that players sign up for the program is because THEY WANT TO HAVE FUN.

If the players have a fun time during the season and are eager to play again the following season, then the coach can be certain that he or she has done a good job. Hopefully, along the way, the players will learn more about soccer, but the primary purpose of the program is for them to enjoy it and want to play soccer again and again.

With this philosophy in mind, please continue reading this coaches Program Manual. Thank you very much for volunteering to coach. Hopefully the coaches will also have fun during the season.

BEFORE THE SEASON STARTS

PLAYER REGISTRATION

The deadline for children to register for the fall season is set in early August. Once the registration deadline has passed, the Division Commissioner will create a sufficient number of teams each consisting of a maximum of 14 players (12 for the Bantams and Microns Divisions) . Late registrants will be put on a waiting list but will not put on a team unless there is an opening on one of the teams.

Team assignments will be posted on the LMSC web page (www.lmsc.net) on Labor Day Weekend. Players will be instructed to check the web site to find out what team they are on as well as where and when their first practice is.

PRE-SEASON COACHES MEETING

There will be a coaches meeting after Labor Day weekend and before the start of the season. All head coaches and assistant coaches will be expected to attend.

At the meeting, coaches will be given the following items:

- Team rosters with players' phone numbers, parents names and e-mail addresses.
- One game ball.
- One jersey for each player.
- Two goalie jerseys (not applicable for the Bantams and Microns Divisions).
- Age appropriate coaching material to help run effective practices.
- One game schedule / parent letter for each player.

Field assignments will be given for each group and a field schedule for practices will be finalized.

After the Coaches Meeting and before the first practice, each head coach should call the players on his/her team and remind them of when and where their first practice is.

FIRST PRACTICE AND FIRST GAME

The first practice will be on the Saturday immediately after Labor Day Weekend, unless that weekend conflicts with a religious holiday. The exact time and field of the first practice for each team will be assigned by the LMSC Officers. The first **game** for each team will be held on the **following** Saturday (unless the Saturday is a religious holiday, in which case the first games will be held on the Saturday after that).

Every team will be expected to have had a second practice during the week before their first game .

NEW PLAYERS WISHING TO SIGN UP

During the first couple of weeks of the season, we receive late registrations. If there are still openings on any teams in the division, the Division Commissioner will assign these players to a team. If there are no openings on any teams, the players will be put on a wait list.

If a coach wants to add a player to his / her team, the coach must first contact the Division Commissioner. The coach must not already have a full roster and the player **MUST** be of the proper age. The coach will need to tell the family of the new player to obtain a registration form from the LMSC web page, fill it out and mail it in to LMSC along with the registration fee. This is necessary for insurance purposes and so that the new player can be put on the LMSC mailing list for future mailings.

THE FIRST PRACTICE OF THE SEASON

ITEMS TO DISTRIBUTE TO EACH PLAYER AT THE FIRST PRACTICE

- One game jersey.
- A copy of the game schedule / parent letter.
- Player list with phone numbers, e-mail addresses and parents names (to help them to form car pools).
- The weekday and time that practices will be held during the season.

If a player has a conflict with the practice schedule, contact the Division Commissioner and ask that the player be moved to a team with an opening and no practice night conflict.

PLAYERS ARE NOT TO BE SWITCHED TO A DIFFERENT TEAM UNLESS THEY REQUEST THIS! Do not just trade a player to another team in order to get another player. The reason for this is that players assigned to a team are probably car pooling with one or more of the other players on your team. Do not randomly trade any player!

WHAT TO TELL PLAYERS TO BRING TO EACH PRACTICE AND GAME

- Soccer ball with the player's name clearly written on it in magic marker (the Bantams, Juniors, Microns and Quasars Divisions will use a size 3 ball while the Intermediates and Protons Divisions will use a size 4 ball).
- A filled plastic (not glass) water bottle.
- Shin guards (MANDATORY for all games and all practices).
- Team jersey and a white tee shirt (if your team color is white, have them bring a dark tee shirt).
- Soccer cleats. Sneakers and soccer flats should not be worn if at all possible.
- Navy LMSC shorts and white soccer socks, worn OVER the shin guards.

Be sure ALL players bring a ball to practice to ensure a 1:1 ball per player ratio. This will enable coaches to maximize skill development.

The white tee shirt will allow the coach to divide the players into two teams at practice for different skill development activities and small sided games (2 v 2, 3 v 3, etc.) Players should also bring the white tee shirt to games in case of a color conflict with the opposing team.

All soccer items, including LMSC game shorts and soccer socks, can be purchased at Sneaky Pete's Discount Sneakers, located at 5 West Lancaster Avenue in Ardmore.

STARTING THE FIRST PRACTICE

After giving out jerseys and the above information, begin the practice by teaching one or two skills of the game. Check to be sure that each child is having a **FUN** time during the practice. For more information on running a practice, please read LMSC's *Coaches Manual For Our 6 - 8 Year Old Teams*. This Coaches Manual describes in detail how to run effective practices. The manual lists numerous activities that can be used in all practice sessions during the season.

FUTURE PRACTICES

Have a second practice before the following Saturday when the first games will be played. Remember that **practices are to ONLY be held on the field assigned to their division** by the LMSC Officers. Use of a different field, will require permission from the LMSC Officers. All of the fields controlled by LMSC have a specific division using them or have the travel teams using them.

END OF THE PRACTICE

Be sure each child knows when, where and at what time the next practice is.

HOW TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Each team should have one practice a week, with each practice 90 minutes in length. Practices can be on a weeknight or on Sunday afternoon when no games are scheduled for the field. The coach should designate a particular practice day (which is convenient for his/her personal schedule) and stick to that schedule throughout the season.

The coach should be the **FIRST PERSON TO ARRIVE AT PRACTICE** (at least 10 minutes early).

The coach should be the **LAST PERSON TO LEAVE PRACTICE** (only after the last player has left). Never leave a practice until **EVERY** player has been picked up.

All coaches should coordinate their practice schedule with their Division Commissioner who will be sure that at most two teams have a field on a particular day or time. It is more than likely that teams will have to share the field with another team due to the large number of teams in the program.

AGENDA FOR PRACTICE

All practices should be divided into three equal sections:

- Warm up and skills development
- Small sided group activities
- Small sided scrimmage

STAGE 1: WARM UP AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Practices should always start with skill development. **Each** player should have a ball or be sharing a ball with at most one other player. At each practice, teach one or two skills. Get the players moving and active as soon as possible.

At the beginning of skills development, the players should first practice the correct technique with no opposition. Once they can perform the technique, some form of mild opposition or pressure should be gradually introduced so they can practice executing the technique under game like pressure.

Players should always have a ball during skills development. Jumping jacks, situps, running laps, etc. do **NOTHING** for skill development and are a **waste of time** for children of these ages. Stretching at these ages is not needed and should be avoided. Youngsters will get plenty of exercise and conditioning both at home and at school. **Practice time should be spent developing soccer skills and tactics.**

STAGE 2: SMALL SIDED GROUP ACTIVITIES

After the players have had sufficient time to practice the skill the coach is teaching, practice should progress to where the players can try the skill in small sided (group) activities. Be sure to use activities where the players will be able to not only practice the skill just learned, but will be able to experience a high level of **SUCCESS** under pressure using the skill just practiced.

Adjust the level of pressure in activities to ensure success. If the players cannot execute the skill under pressure, adjust any or all of the following items to gain success:

- **SIZE OF THE PLAYING AREA USED** for the activity. Making an area larger will allow the players more time to think and react, thus making success more probable. Reducing an area will force the players to think and react faster, as well as play the ball with better technique.
- **THE NUMBER OF DEFENDERS.** Most activities in this stage do not use an equal number of players on the two teams. Vary the ratio of offensive to defensive players to ensure success.
- **THE PRESSURE OF THE DEFENDERS.** They can be told to walk, crawl, grab their socks, etc., to limit the amount of pressure placed on the attackers. Alternatively, a coach can serve as a defender and apply an appropriate amount of pressure to force the players to play fast, but still with success.

As an example, say that the team is working on passing by doing a 3 v 2 keepaway game in a 20 by 10 yard grid. For 7 and 8 year olds, this will almost surely fail. The coach could make the grid larger (30 by 20 yards), change the game to 4 v 2 or 3 v 1 or require the defenders to walk, thus giving the attacking team enough time to do the activity successfully while under pressure. The coach could also serve as the defender and apply just the right amount of pressure.

Always observe the activity to see if the attackers are CHALLENGED, but still experiencing enough SUCCESS to make the activity worthwhile. Be ready to make adjustments to the activity if it is too easy or too difficult for the players.

When necessary, stop the activity to make a coaching point to the players. Keep comments BRIEF. DEMONSTRATE (or have a player demonstrate) when appropriate. If helpful, have one or two players walk through the activity to demonstrate the coaching point made.

Coaching COMMENTS need to be BRIEF and to the point. Be sure to NOT "over-coach." Do not stop the practice every 10 seconds to talk. Let the players have as much time doing the activity as possible. Stick to comments related to the skill being emphasized. A good time to make coaching corrections is when the players are a bit tired and need to rest for a few seconds. Players can get their rest while listening to the coaches comments.

STAGE 3: SMALL SIDED SCRIMMAGE

Practice should always FINISH with a scrimmage. This ensures that all players will go home with smiles on their faces since they like to compete. In the scrimmage, try to encourage them to use the skill they worked on earlier.

If desired, add restrictions to the game to force them to attempt the skill (i.e., for passing, the player must try to pass the ball each time he/she gets it until they are in shooting range. For dribbling, require all players to try and dribble past an opponent before passing or shooting).

During the scrimmage, comments and corrections should only be made AFTER the players have played for several minutes. Coaching comments should NOT be made during the last 5-10 minutes of the scrimmage. Let the kids have their fun at this time, let them play.

End of practice scrimmages should NOT be played against another team. Instead, divide your team into two SMALL teams and play 4 v 4 or 5 v 5. An even more effective way to end practice is to divide the players into four teams and have two games of 3 v 3. Use cones or other markers as goals and play games cross field if desired. Be sure to have as many kids active as possible during this time. There should be AT MOST one substitute on each team.

THE END OF PRACTICE

When the practice is over, quickly bring in the players and briefly discuss the skill they just learned and how it applied to the scrimmage. Let them know when their next game or practice is. Be sure they collect their ball, jackets, sweatpants, etc. Be sure they all have a ride home.

IDEAS FOR RUNNING PRACTICES

LMSC provides coaches with several books, including the *Coaches Manual For Our 6 Year Old Teams* as well as the *Coaches Manual For Our 7 & 8 Year Old Teams*. This manual lists numerous activities that can be used in all practice sessions during the season. If you do not already have a copy and would like one, please contact the LMSC President.

PRACTICE PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of practice is to develop skills. To do this, players should have as many "touches" on the ball at practice. Players are NOT to stand in long lines waiting to try the skill. If each player has a ball or shares one with another player, they will maximize the number of "touches" as well as skill development.

This same philosophy applies to end of practice scrimmages. If you have one large scrimmage against another team, 22 players will have to share one ball and many players will be on the sideline. If you play a 5 v 5 game, many players will be active and at most 10 players will have to share the ball. If you play two simultaneous games of 3 v 3, almost all players will be active and at most 6 players will have to share the ball on each field. Player development will be maximized and all players will have a lot of fun.

GAME DAY PROCEDURES

WHEN TO ARRIVE AT THE FIELD

Players should be instructed to show up **30 minutes before** game time. This will allow the coach to properly warm up the players, practice newly learned skills, go over game strategy, divide the players into two different playing groups, give out starting positions, etc.

Pre-game warmups should AT ALL TIMES involve one ball per player or one ball per two players. Activities should be designed to get the players moving around while at the same time increasing their skill level. Do not have players doing warm up activities not involving a ball such as jumping jacks, situps, stretching or laps around the field without a ball.

STARTING THE GAMES

Quickly divide the players into two equal size teams. Assign each team to one of the two fields. The teams are to be divided equally in talent. There should not be a “strong” team and a “weak” team. Have an assistant coach or a parent in charge of the team that the head coach is not with. Be sure there are four field players on each field. Each team must also have a goalie, except for the Bantams and Microns Divisions which do not use goalies.

If one team has a shortage of players, one or both of the games will have to be played with one less field player on the field. In this situation, the goals may be moved up to the edge of the penalty area to make the field a bit smaller.

Be sure the games start promptly. The referees are instructed to end the games a few minutes before the start of the next scheduled game. If you start your game late, your players will get less playing time.

SIDELINES

Coaches and players from each team should share the space between the two fields. Parents should be at the opposite sidelines so that the coaches and players are not over crowded and can see the games easier.

STARTING THE GAME

Games are scheduled to start PROMPTLY at the time the schedule indicates. In order to get the full 50 minute game in, teams must be ready to start the game PROMPTLY. If the game does not start on time, the referee will end the game early enough to allow the next game to start on time. This means that your team will not get their full 50 minutes of time if you start late. Have your team ready to start as soon as the previous game ends.

PLAYER POSITIONS

- The Bantams and Microns Divisions do **NOT** use goalies. Goals are 6 feet long and 4 feet high. Each team will play with four field players on the field.
- The Juniors, Intermediates, Quasars and Protons divisions play with goalies. Goals are 12 feet long and 6 feet high. Each team will play with four field players and a goalie on the field.

For divisions using goalies, the coach should rotate the players so that all players play goalie during each game. Instruct the goalies to move up the field when their team is in possession of the ball. The goalie should help the offense, offering a drop pass when needed. The goalie should be used by teams to switch the ball from one sideline to the other. **GOALIES SHOULD BE AN ACTIVE PART OF THE OFFENSE.**

SPECIAL GOALIE RULES (NOT APPLICABLE TO THE BANTAMS OR MICRONS)

Goalies may only use their hands inside the goalie box. They may NOT pick the ball up when it is passed to them by a teammate. Instead, they must play the ball with their feet. Goalies may NOT punt or throw the ball in the air past the midfield line. Goalies may put the ball on the ground and dribble the ball up the field if no opponent is near. Otherwise, the goalie should play the ball to a teammate positioned off to the side of the field.

Each team will be given two goalie jerseys. The coach is to keep the goalie shirts and bring them to all games and practices. These shirts should be worn by the goalies so that the referee and the other players will be able to easily identify who is playing goalie.

HALFTIME

There will be a 5 minute halftime. Let the players get some water before talking with them. During the halftime discussion, discuss at most two or three items that players need to focus on in the second half. These items should NOT be new tactical ideas, just a reinforcement of items which were worked on or discussed in previous practices.

At halftime, one team should rotate the players around so that each team plays the opponent's other half of players.

PLAYING TIME

All players are to be given equal playing time, regardless of ability. The top players are NOT to get extra player time, nor is the child of the coach. All players are to play a MINIMUM of half the game, barring injury or discipline problems.

MAKING SUBSTITUTIONS

Special Intramural Rule: If a team is losing by four or more goals, the coach may put an extra player on the field until the deficit is reduced to three goals.

Substitutions may be made whenever the ball goes out of play, or when there is an injury. Substituting while the game is in progress may only be done if absolutely necessary. When the ball goes out of play, coaches are to get the attention of the referee by yelling "substitutions, please." If the referee does not hear you and play continues, the substitutes may not enter the field.

Coaches are urged to minimize the number of times substitutions are made since the process reduces the amount of time the ball is in play during the game.

GAME COACHING

Game day is the time for children to have fun. Do not be constantly yelling out instructions to the players, telling them what to do what to do each time they touch the ball. Soccer is a game of decision making, please let the players make their own decisions with the ball. DON'T make the decisions for the players.

One of the biggest problems in youth sports is "over-coaching" which can be described as a coach who is constantly yelling out instructions to the players. This is both annoying and confusing to the players who probably do not even understand what the coach is yelling.

Coaching comments should ONLY be made when the player is AWAY from the ball. At that time, the coach should only briefly mention to the specific player any comments about the PREVIOUS play. Never tell a player what to do while he has the ball.

It is very important that coaches MINIMIZE their coaching to the important things and not shout instructions every time a player touches the ball. The majority of comments made by a coach should be limited to "encouragement" and "enthusiasm." Keep your comments positive. Negative comments should be kept to a bare minimum.

As a test of this, try to silently count out 20 seconds to yourself immediately after making a coaching comment during a game. Do not allow yourself to make another comment during these 20 seconds. As the season goes on, try to increase this to 30 seconds and up to a minute by the end of the season. If you find yourself failing this test, then you are guilty of "over-coaching."

RUNNING UP THE SCORE

If a team should get a large lead in a game, try to prevent running up the score. There are several ways to accomplish this. The first thing to do is take your star players off the field or have them play goalie and defense. The second thing to do is put the players who are least likely to score up on the front line.

LMSC uses a special rule which is unique to their program to lessen the chances of a team running up a score:

A TEAM THAT IS DOWN BY FOUR GOALS OR MORE MAY PLAY WITH AN EXTRA PLAYER ON THE FIELD.

The extra player must be removed if the goal difference drops back down to under four goals.

PARENT AND SPECTATOR CONDUCT DURING THE GAME

Equally as disturbing as an overbearing coach is an overbearing parent. At the start of the season, tell all of the parents to limit any communication on game days to that of POSITIVE CHEERING. They are NOT to coach YOUR players and are NOT to tell YOUR players what to do during the game (including their own child!) Establish this policy right away.

This is the standard rule for all travel teams. Hopefully it will become the standard rule for all intramural teams. Please, don't let the parents ruin their child's soccer experience!

WHEN THE GAME ENDS

- Immediately after the second half of play ends, the two halves of each team should get together in single file and shake hands with the opposing team. Be sure that players do not say anything derogatory to the members of the other team. Teaching sportsmanship is an important responsibility of the coaches.
- Give the players time to get a snack and water. Be sure to delegate a different family each week to bring snacks. The coach should NOT be responsible for bringing the snacks. Snacks should include water, juice, cookies, fruit, etc. Snacks are only to be served AFTER the game, NOT at halftime. Be sure that the snacks are served well away from the sideline so as not to be interfere with the teams playing in the next game.
- Please be sure to remove all trash after the game. Check for any items that players or their families left behind.
- Gather the players together (away from the parents) for about 5-10 minutes and briefly review the game. Discuss good points and bad points (but be sure to mention how to correct the bad points). Before excusing the players for the day, be sure that every family knows when the next practice will be held. After the players leave, check for any items that players might have left behind (sweat pants, jackets, balls, cameras, etc.)

ABOUT THE REFEREES

It must be reemphasized that the referee's job is to ensure the safety of the children and maximize their enjoyment of the game. Please be aware that the referees are quite young (12 years old on up). They are not to be yelled at. Referees are ONLY to take orders from the LMSC Officers and the Division Commissioner, not from coaches.

Every effort will be made to provide a referee for each game. If there is no referee, the coaches of the two teams must find someone to referee the game or agree to each referee half the game.

Games on the Saturday of Columbus Day weekend (in early October) will probably not have enough referees since most of the referees who play in the LMSC Travel Team Program will be playing in one of the many Columbus Day Weekend Travel Team Tournaments.

IN THE EVENT OF BAD WEATHER

There will be occasions where a game starts and bad weather later approaches while the game is in progress. Games are to be terminated immediately if lightning is sighted. In the event of lightning, coaches are to instruct the players to quickly gather their belongings and get to safety. This will usually be their parents' car. Coaches need to be sure that all players are accounted for. Games are also to be terminated if there is heavy rain or if puddles are forming on the field. This is because continued play could lead to the players damaging the fields. Since the fields we play on are the property of the school district or township, we need to follow their directive to terminate the game immediately. Playing when there is only a slight drizzle is acceptable.

TEAM TACTICS

Team Tactics (strategy used during a game) should be kept simple. Coaches working with 6 - 8 year olds should concentrate on developing each player's technical skills. Complex tactics are generally beyond the comprehension of children of these ages.

The basic game philosophy of coaches MUST BE: **to allow children to handle the ball and practice the skills they have learned.** When a player has the ball, he/she should be encouraged to do any one of three things with it:

PASS DRIBBLE SHOOT

Players should NEVER be allowed to just blast the ball down the field. That is not passing, not dribbling and not shooting. In order to develop their skills in the fastest possible time frame, players must be encouraged to try and beat an opponent with the ball or look around for a teammate to pass to.

Coaches who tell players to just boot the ball down the field are going against the coaching philosophy of both LMSC and the United States Soccer Federation. Please encourage the players to "take chances" and try the skills they have been taught and have practiced. Do not criticize them for trying their skills in games, even if they do not succeed. Players will fail many times on their road to skill development. Eventually, they will be able to accomplish their skills.

Players on defense should NEVER be told to kick the ball out of bounds to stop the other teams attack. Instead, they must be encouraged to try and steal the ball and start your teams counterattack. This philosophy will allow the players to develop their attacking skills. Kicking a ball out of bounds develops no skill whatsoever.

GOALIES

As mentioned, goalies should be encouraged to be part of the offense when their team has the ball. They should go up as far as the midfield line and help their team try to score. They should remember that the other team cannot score a goal from their defensive half of the field so the goalie should have plenty of time to get back to the goal if their team loses the ball.

Goalies should call for a drop pass when a teammate needs help. The goalie should then look to play the ball to a teammate on the opposite side of the field. Remember that goalies may not use their hands when a teammate passes the ball to them.

*** Please remember that the Bantams Division and Microns Division do NOT use goalies.

FIELD PLAYERS

The four field players need to learn to play both offense and defense. Their play should ALWAYS be skill oriented. On defense, they should NEVER be told to kick the ball out of bounds to deny an opponent a scoring chance. The players should learn to play the ball skillfully and creatively at all times. Coaches need to remember that the objective of the season is player development and NOT winning.

All players should move up the field on offense and back on defense.

The best way to instill this skill oriented style of coaching is to not allow "boom ball" play. Boom ball is a style of play where players just kick the ball down field as hard as they can. This leads to a "kick and run" style of play which is what we DO NOT WANT. When a player gets the ball, please require the player to "PASS, DRIBBLE or SHOOT" when the player gets the ball. Let the player decide which of these three things to do, but don't let the player play boom ball. In your scrimmages at the end of your practices, make boom ball a penalty which gives the other team a free kick.

Keep in mind that if a player "booms" the ball, the player will have developed no skill and will have very little soccer success in future years. If you instill a skill oriented, attacking style of play in your players now, they will have the potential to develop into soccer stars in the future. It is this coaching philosophy that will have the greatest impact on the players future. Let them attack, don't worry about winning and losing.

COACHES

Good coaches must realize that player development requires players to take chances. The players must be allowed to make mistakes. If they cannot try to use their skills and be risk takers, they will not make mistakes, but will not develop either. Let them try to develop their skills, let them try, allow them to fail. If they try their skill enough times, they will learn to succeed and you will have developed a skilled soccer player!

Obviously this liberal style of coaching will result in mistakes leading to goals by the other team. Remember that your job as a coach is to develop players. Be patient, don't worry about the score or about winning. Let your players develop skills, let them develop into top notch soccer players. This should be your gauge to success.

AN ANALOGY FOR THE NOVICE COACH

Think of your soccer game as a pro basketball game. When LeBron James gets a defensive rebound under pressure, he does not throw the ball out of bounds and he does not just throw the ball downfield (neither should your soccer players). Instead, LeBron quickly analyzes the situation and either passes the ball to a teammate or dribbles the ball away from the basket, down the court (just as your players should do).

When the game is on the line with time running out, LeBron will be sure to use his skills and drive for the basket. He could not have developed his skills if he had a youth coach telling him to play conservative. Instead, he learned to go on the attack as a youngster. This developed skill, confidence and an attacking philosophy. Don't try to hold back your players with conservative coaching. Let them attack, let them demonstrate the skills they learned, let them go 1 on 1 with an opponent. You will be letting them develop skill, letting them learn to attack AND letting them have fun.

INJURIES AND PLAYER EMERGENCIES

RECKLESS PLAY

Coaches are responsible for the safety of the players (including the safety of the opposing players). If one of your players is playing out of control or is being a bully, correct this immediately. Coaches have the right to remove a player from a game or practice in order to correct any problem. The player should NOT be allowed to return to play until the coach is satisfied that the problem has been resolved.

DEALING WITH AN INJURY

If a child is injured during a game, the referee will IMMEDIATELY stop play. Remind the referee of this if he fails to stop play. If the referee does not notice that a player is injured, the coaches of both teams should immediately notify the referee so that play can be stopped.

Once play has stopped, the coaches of both teams should have the players on the field sit down and stay AWAY from the injured player. Other players ARE NOT to be kicking the ball around since it might accidentally hit the injured player.

When a player is injured, the player's coach should immediately come onto the field and try to calm the player down. Chances are that the player is frightened and unable to catch his breath. Have the player breathe slow and deep to bring his breathing back under control. Comfort the child and try to relieve him of any fear or anxiety.

An injured child should NEVER be helped up off the ground until the injury has been diagnosed and the player has regained his composure. The player should remain on the ground until the coach is sure that it is all right for him to get up. If the injury appears serious, the player's parents should be waved onto the field.

If a serious injury has occurred and the player's parents are not at the field, check to see if the parents of one of the player's friends are present. These parents should try to calm the player down and then try to contact the player's parents. If there are no adults nearby to care for the child, assign someone to take over the team while you try to contact the player's parents. Find someone with a cell phone to use to contact the injured child's parents.

Coaches should ALWAYS carry a list of the player's phone numbers to practices and games.

DEALING WITH AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

Coaches must never leave the team without adult supervision. It is important to have at least one other responsible adult (who has a car) at both games and practices. This is a very important item since it will help to deal not only with an injury when the parent is not available, but also help deal with a player suddenly getting sick or having a bathroom emergency.

Often times a player will suddenly get sick and need to go home or use a bathroom. Having another adult drive the player home or to a restroom will allow the coach to stay with the rest of the team.

It is also a good idea to keep a roll of toilet paper in the trunk of the car for the players in case of an unexpected emergency. (Note: this paragraph was added at the request of several "veteran" coaches who have experienced such a situation.)

CHILDREN RUNNING INTO THE STREET AFTER A BALL

If the field that your team is playing on or practicing on is near a street, be sure that players never run into the street after a ball. Players should never go into the street. Instead, have a responsible adult go into the street to get the ball. Remember that one of our primary objectives is the safety of the players.

If a player is about to run into the street, immediately SCREAM as loud as possible to stop a player who is about to run into the street. On game day, make sure to have at least one parent who is watching the game stand near any area where a ball can go into a street.

SAFETY OF OTHER PEOPLE AT THE FIELD

Occasionally parents will leave the player's brothers or sisters at the field unattended while they dash off to the stores. While coaches are not baby sitters for these other players, they need to keep an eye out for other children who are at the field.

NOBODY should be climbing on the nets of the goals. Tell people to get off of the nets immediately. Older kids are not to be kicking balls around near the players. If one of the younger players gets hit by a ball kicked by an older person the player could get hurt. Be sure that no older kids are presenting a danger to the players.

If a stray dog wanders on the field, be sure to keep it away from the players. Many youngsters have a great fear of dogs and will immediately panic if they see a stray dog wandering about.

THE END OF THE SEASON

LAST GAME OF THE SEASON

Just before the last game of the season, the Division Commissioner will give each coach 14 trophies (12 for the Bantams and Microns teams). These trophies are to be given out to the players at the conclusion of the last game.

Coaches may keep the game ball or give it to one of the players on the team. They may also keep the practice cones and goalie shirts which were distributed at the start of the season. Hopefully coaches will consider coaching again in future seasons and use these items at that time.

TEAM PARTY

Teams are encouraged to have a team party after the season. This can be done at someone's house, at a local McDonalds or pizza store, a bowling alley or near the field right after the last game.

PARENTS VS. KIDS GAME

Some teams have enjoyed having a parents kids game after the season. The coach must contact the LMSC Officers to reserve a field for a particular time and date since other teams might have the same idea at the same time.

It is important that the coach tells all participating parents to not play hard. Often times an overexcited parent will either run over a youngster or kick a ball right into a player and injure him. A general rule for parents vs. kids games is to require the parents to run at half speed or less at all times and also require the parents to keep the ball on the ground at ALL times.

YOUTH SOCCER COACHING COURSES

Both the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) sponsor coaching licensing programs at many different levels for coaches to learn more about both soccer and coaching. Some coaching courses are geared for the novice parent coach while other courses are geared for coaches who work at the collegiate level or professional level.

LMSC will e-mail information about these courses to all coaches. Courses are generally held during the winter months, after the fall season has finished and before the spring season has started. Those adults who are not signed up as a coach but who would like to register for a coaching course should contact LMSC.

THE END OF SEASON ALL STAR GAMES

At the end of the season, LMSC will hold all star games for each division (except our youngest divisions; the Atoms, Neutrons, Pee-Wees and Special Needs Divisions). Each player selected to play in the all star games will be given an LMSC All Star Game tee shirt as well as an All Star Game roster with the participating players' names on the roster.

Approximately three weeks before the all star games, the LMSC Officers will e-mail each head coach and ask them to rank their **all** of their players from strongest to weakest. The LMSC Officers will use these evaluations as part of the process to determine which players are to participate in the all star games. These evaluations will also be used to try and make fair and even teams in future seasons.

The LMSC Officers will use the following criteria to invite players to participate in the All Star Games:

- observations made by LMSC Officers and LMSC travel team coaches (this is the primary criteria for selection)
- the intramural coaches evaluations
- the strength of each intramural team, compared to the other teams in the division
- the age of the players (no overage players will be selected for the all star games)

The LMSC Officers will notify the selected players by mail as to their selection. The intramural coaches will NOT be a part of the selection process or the notification process.

There will NOT be a set number of players that will make the all star game from each team,

Coaches are not authorized to tell a player if he / she is being selected for the all star games since the coaches are not the ones who determine who will be selected for the all star games.

One of the purposes of the all star games is for the travel team coaches to watch these players in action. Many of the players in the intramural program will tryout for the Under 8 Developmental Travel Team Academy the following year or tryout for the LMSC Travel Team Program. The all star games allow travel team coaches to observe the players in a competitive situation without the players having to feel the pressures of a tryout.

Overage players in the divisions will NOT be eligible for the all star games, NO EXCEPTIONS.

The player evaluations submitted by the coaches will also be used in following intramural seasons to help make fair and even teams. It is very important that coaches evaluate ALL players on their team, not just the top players who will be in consideration to play in the all star games.

It will be very important for the head coaches to respond to the e-mail requesting them to evaluate the players so that these evaluations can be used to help with the selection of the players for the all star games.

BEYOND THE MIDDLE AGE DIVISIONS

THE TRAVEL TEAM PROGRAM

One of the primary objectives of the intramural program is to develop the more talented and enthusiastic players for the LMSC Travel Team Program. The travel teams compete against other clubs such as Downingtown, West Chester, Nether Providence (Media area) and Philadelphia Soccer Club.

Each year, LMSC fields up to four boys teams to play in the fall Delco League in age groups Under 9 up through Under 15. LMSC also fields up to four girls teams in the same age groups to play in the fall Philadelphia Area Girls Soccer League (PAGS). LMSC will also field U-15 through U-19 teams to play after the high school soccer season has ended. The number of each teams in each age group is dependent on the number of players trying out and the number of qualified coaches that are available in the age group. Each team will be placed in a division within their league that will provide an appropriate competitive level.

The more talented and enthusiastic players in the intramural program are strongly encouraged to tryout for the Travel Team Program when they are old enough.

The Travel Team Program provides a more experienced coaching staff, a higher level of competition and a more extensive soccer experience for the players.

Lower Merion Soccer Club's Travel Team Program is among the best in the state. LMSC teams have won 37 State Championships since 1989. Six former LMSC players have progressed to the professional level. Numerous LMSC players have been chosen for the State Select teams.

Former LMSC player Ben Olsen played for the USA in the World Cup in 2006 in Germany as well as the Olympics in Sydney, Australia in 2000. Former LMSC player Jon Conway was an All-American selection at Rutgers and now plays for the Chicago Fire of the MLS (Major League Soccer). In 1999, former LMSC player Suzie Grech was chosen as the starting goalie for Spain's Under 18 Women's National Team. In 1997, Conway was a member of the USA Under 20 National Team. In 1990, former LMSC player Will Kohler was a member of the United States Under 17 National Team and started in the Under 17 World Cup for the USA. In 2004, Dylan Mencia was selected for the Region One USA Team. In 2006, former LMSC player Max Kurtzman was selected for the Under 15 National team. Former LMSC player Jimmy McLaughlin plays for the Philadelphia Union Academy and made an appearance for the Union.

THE UNDER 8 DEVELOPMENTAL TRAVEL TEAM ACADEMY

In June, LMSC holds tryouts for their Under 8 Developmental Travel Team Academy. One girls team and one boys team will be picked. Players picked for the boys U-8 team will be primarily the most talented players from the Intermediates Division and Juniors Division while the players picked for the girls U-8 team will be primarily the most talented players from the Protons Division and the Quasars Division.

Players MUST be exactly 7 years old as of July 31 of that year to be eligible to tryout. This is in conformance with United States Soccer Federation age group classifications. No player will be taken on the team who was exactly 6 years old or 8 years old on July 31 of that year.

Each team will train together from September through early April under the supervision of the LMSC Coaching Staff. During the fall, the team will train two times a week and play small sided games once a week. In the winter, each team will play in local indoor soccer leagues at a nearby indoor soccer facility.

The Developmental Travel Team Program will give our more talented players a chance to develop their skills and prepare for the actual Travel Team Program that will start the following fall.

THE OLDER INTRAMURAL DIVISIONS

In the fall, LMSC offers older intramural divisions for players not playing in the Travel Team Program, including the Senior Division for boys 9-10 years of age, the Majors Division for boys 11-13 years of age, the Electrons Division for girls 9-10 years of age and the Cosmos Division for girls 11-13 years of age. These divisions all play on larger fields with more players on each team and more players on the field at one time. The older age groups rules more closely resemble adult soccer.

THE DIVISION COMMISSIONER

Each division will have its own commissioner who will be in charge of the following items:

TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

In late August, the Division Commissioners will make team assignments for their division. The Division Commissioners will attempt to honor teammate and car pool requests as much as possible. Once the Commissioner is done making team assignments, he / she will give the team assignment list back to club so that the team assignments can be posted on the LMSC web page.

The club will then assign late sign-ups to teams with openings until the pre-season coaches meeting takes place. After the pre-season coaches meeting, the Division Commissioners will coordinate all rosters and team assignments for the rest of the season. Players may not be added to teams if the team has a full roster.

COORDINATING TRADES AND SWITCHING A PLAYER TO A DIFFERENT DIVISION

During the season, the Commissioner will coordinate all player trades and team switches. During the first two weeks of play, the Division Commissioner will be in contact with head coaches and switch players who have conflicts with their practice schedules.

On occasion, a player will have signed up for the wrong division. LMSC does NOT guarantee correcting this problem after the registration deadline. If a player requests to be put in a different division, the Division Commissioner will attempt to transfer the player to the requested division. If this is not possible, the player will have to remain on the current team or drop out of the program.

COACHES MEETING

Division Commissioners will pick up their Division's jerseys, game balls and equipment several days before the coaches meeting. The Commissioners will distribute these items at the coaches meeting. The Commissioners will also distribute team rosters and game schedules at the meeting.

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

At the pre-season coaches meeting, the Commissioner will double check to make sure all teams have a set night (or Sunday afternoon) scheduled for their weekly practice. Times for Sunday practices may be 1:00 - 2:30, 2:30 - 4:00 or 4:00 - 5:30. Practices may not be scheduled on Sunday afternoons when games are scheduled for the field that the division uses.

END OF THE SEASON

Commissioners will be supplied with end of the season trophies. The Commissioner will give each coach 12 trophies to distribute to the players. Coaches are to give out the trophies to the players immediately AFTER their last game of the season.

Also at the end of the season, coaches will be sent a program evaluation form. The coaches will be asked fill out this form, enclosing ideas on how to make the program better in future seasons.