



LOWER MERION SOCCER CLUB

SPRING INTRAMURAL PROGRAM

PROGRAM MANUAL FOR THE MIDDLE AGE DIVISIONS

JUNIOR DIVISION	-- 7 year old boys
INTERMEDIATES DIVISION	-- 8 & 9 year old boys
QUASARS DIVISION	-- 7 year old girls
PROTONS DIVISION	-- 8 & 9 year old girls

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PROGRAM MANUAL FOR THE MIDDLE AGE DIVISIONS

JUNIORS, INTERMEDIATES, QUASARS AND PROTONS DIVISIONS

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

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 younger divisions which 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 divided into teams of up to 14 players. Teams will play two simultaneous games of 5 vs. 5 (four field players and a goalie) on adjacent fields. Each team will have a head coach who is in charge of the team for the entire season. Each team will have their own unique jersey color and team name to distinguish them from the other teams.

Each team will have one game per weekend, usually on Sundays. It is possible that a team will have one or more Saturday games in their schedule. The first two weekends will each be a 90 minute practice with no games. Games will start on the third weekend of the season. Unlike the fall program, there will not be a separate practice day. Instead, each team will have a 30 minute practice session before each of their games.

Games are run the same way that they are run in the Fall Intramural Program. Each team will have a 30 minute practice before their game. After the 30 minute practice, each team will split their team into two equal groups. There will be two adjacent fields. Each team will place half of their players on each of the two fields and play a 25 minute half. After a five minute halftime, one of the teams will have their two groups switch fields. The teams will then play a second 25 minute half. Note that when the teams split their players into two groups, they should be EQUAL in numbers and EQUAL in strength. Coaches are strongly asked to not make one team a strong team and the other team a weak team.

While scores are kept for each game, standings for the season are NOT kept and there is no end of the 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 soccer skills rather than winning and losing.

Each age group will have a Division Commissioner who will be in charge of making up the teams before 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 when possible.

It is important to remember that the players are only children. They are not professional players or players with a lot of soccer experience. Coaches often need to double as child psychologists when dealing with the 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 the players on their team signed 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 / 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 manual. Thank you very much for volunteering to coach. I hope that you have fun in the program also.

BEFORE THE SEASON STARTS

PRE-SEASON COACHES MEETING

The coaches meeting will be held about five days before the start of the season. At the coaches meeting, coaches will be given the following items:

- Team rosters with the names of the players, their parents names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses
- One game ball
- 14 jerseys (each team will be assigned a unique color)
- 16 practice cones, to be used to mark out playing areas for different practice activities.
- Two yellow goalie pinnies
- *LMSC Coaching Manual For 7 - 9 Year Old Teams*
- 14 game schedules (one per player)

CONTACTING THE PLAYERS BEFORE THE FIRST PRACTICE

Before the first practice, each head coach should contact the players on his / her team and remind them of when and where their first practice is. This information will be posted on our web page, in the Spring Intramural Program section, about a week before the start of the season.

FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON

The first two Sundays will each be 90 minute practices. The first game for each team will be held on the third weekend of the season, unless that weekend is a religious holiday, in which case the first games will be the weekend after that. Coaches are asked to plan a 90 minute practice ahead of time. They are encouraged to refer to the "*LMSC Coaches Manual For 7 - 9 Year Old Teams*" manual which outlines several recommended practice sessions for these ages.

NEW PLAYERS WISHING TO SIGN UP

During the first couple of weeks of each season, we receive several late registrations. The Division Commissioner will assign these players to a team, provided there is a team that does not have a full roster. We will not go past the 14 player limit on any team.

If the 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 have the player fill out a registration form and mail it in right away 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 THE PLAYERS

- Game jerseys
- Game schedules
- A list of players and coaches with phone numbers and e-mail addresses (to help them organize car pools)

PLAYERS WHO REQUEST TO BE TRADED TO ANOTHER TEAM

If a player requests to be moved to another team, coordinate this with the Division Commissioner. Players may only be moved if there is an opening on the team that the player has requested to be moved to. Coaches are NOT to try and move a player to another team unless the player has specifically requested to be moved to another team.

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 (size 3 for the Juniors and Quasars divisions, size 4 for the Intermediates and Protons divisions). All players should bring a ball to work with.
- 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 the players also bring a dark shirt).
- Soccer cleats. Sneakers and soccer flats should not be used since the fields might be wet and slippery.
- 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. By having each player work with his or her own soccer ball at the same time, skill development will take place at a much faster rate.

The white tee shirt will allow the coach to divide the players into two teams at practice for different skill activities and small sided games (1v1, 2v2, 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 socks, can be purchased at Sneaky Pete's, 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 the *LMSC Coaches Manual For 7 - 9 Year Old Teams*. This manual describes in detail how to run practice activities for 10 different effective, age appropriate practices.

END OF THE PRACTICE

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

Please remember that the Spring Program does NOT have field space available for mid-week practices. Mid-week practices (or weekend practices) only take place in the Fall Intramural Program when more fields are available.

HOW TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Each team will have a 30 minute practice before each game.

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

The coach should also be the LAST PERSON TO LEAVE PRACTICE (only after the last player has left). Never leave a practice until EVERY player has an adult there who is responsible for him / her.

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, with as many balls in use 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. Youngsters will plenty of general exercise and conditioning both at home and at school. **Practice time should be spent developing soccer skills and tactics .**

SMALL SIDED GROUP ACTIVITIES

As stated, the first part of each practice should be devoted to teaching a particular soccer skill. Each player should have his / her own ball to work with. After the players have had sufficient time to work on the skill, change the focus of the practice to having the players practice that skill under pressure of one or more opponents. The coach should organize 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 give them a higher chance of success:

- **SIZE OF THE FIELD AREA USED** for the activities. Making an area larger will allow the players more time to think and react, thus making success more likely. Reducing an area will force the players to think and react faster, as well as play the ball with better technique. Making the field too large will make an activity too easy and too boring. Making the field too small will prevent the players from experiencing any type of success.
- **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. For instance, when teaching the players to pass, a keepaway game of 4 vs. 1 might help, provided the attacking players have a large enough playing area to pass around in.
- **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, the coach or other adult could be the defender and control the amount of pressure that the attackers must deal with.

As an example, say that the team is working on passing by playing 3 v 2 keepaway 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, 3 v 1 or 4 v 1. The coach could also require the defenders to walk, thus giving the attacking team enough time to do the activity successfully while under 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. Different teams will need different parameters (number of defenders, size of the field, etc.) to ensure success in a particular activity.

When necessary, stop the activity to make a coaching point to the players. Be sure to keep coaching 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." Don't stop the practice every 10 seconds to talk. Let the players have as much time doing the activity as possible.

Coaches should restrict the majority of their comments to those related to the skill or tactic that was worked on earlier in practice. Stopping practices every 30 seconds to analyze every aspect of an activity will be an annoyance to the players who will eventually get bored and turned off.

A good time to make coaching corrections is when the players are a bit tired and need to rest for a few seconds. Let the players first catch their breath, then make the desired coaching points while the players are getting a few more seconds of rest time.

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. Players standing in line are not developing any skills, not becoming better players, not having fun and in general, wasting their time.

This same philosophy applies to end of practice scrimmages. If you scrimmage another team, 20 - 24 players will have to share one ball and many players will be on the sideline. If you play several 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 games, all players will be active and only 6 - 8 players will have to share the ball. Players will make many more touches on the ball, make many more decisions on the field, develop much faster as players and have a much better time.

GAME DAY PROCEDURES

WHEN TO ARRIVE AT THE FIELD

Coaches should instruct their players to show up 30 minutes before game time. During that time, the coach should conduct a 30 minute practice that focuses on skill development. Each player should bring a ball to each game so that each player will have their own ball to work with during that time. Coaches should plan a 30 minute practice that will give each player as many touches on the ball as possible. Coaches can also talk briefly to the players about game tactics and strategy, but these talks should be kept short since players these ages have very short attention spans.

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, or laps around the field without a ball.

SIDELINES

Parents and spectators should be at least a yard or more away from the sideline so as not to interfere with play. Only coaches and players should be in the area between the two fields. Parents should not be in the area between the two fields since it makes it difficult for the coaches to work with the players.

STARTING THE GAME

Games must start promptly. In order to get the full two 25 minute halves 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 playing time if you start late. Have your team ready to start as soon as the previous game ends.

PLAYER POSITIONS

Games are played with four field players and a goalie. All field players should play both offense and defense. The goalie should be encouraged to help the offense by coming out beyond the goal area and supporting his / her teammates when they have the ball. All players should be rotated into the goalie position.

No player should play strictly as a defender, no player should play strictly as a forward and no player may play strictly as a goalie. Coaches **must** rotate goaltenders. Every player is to get a chance to play goalie several times during the season.

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

SPECIAL GOALIE RULES

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.

HALFTIME

There will be a five minute break in between the two 25 minute halves. At the end of the break, one team should switch their players to the opposite field so that teams will not play the same group of players in the second half.

Coaches should first let the players get some water and then prepare the players for the second half. During the halftime discussion discuss at most three items that players need to adjust in their game (never more). These adjustments should NOT be new tactical ideas, just a reinforcement of items discussed in previous practices.

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

Standard travel team rules will apply for making substitutions. A coach may make substitutions at the following times:

- When **your** team has a throw in.
- When the **opposing team** has a throw-in, but ONLY IF they substitute.
- When **either** team has a goal kick.
- When play is stopped due to an injury.
- At halftime.
- After a goal has been scored.

To make a substitution, 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.

Please minimize the number of times substitutions are made since the process reduces the amount of time the ball is in play during the game. Please get the players on and off the field as quickly as possible.

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 each time they touch the ball. Soccer is a game of decision making. Please let the players make their own decisions with the ball, DO NOT 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 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 or she has the ball.

It is very important that coaches limit 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 the atmosphere positive. Negative comments must 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. One recommendation is to either take your star players off the field, have them play goalie or ask them to stay back on defense. Another recommendation is put the players who are least likely to score up on the front line.

LMSC uses special rule to lessen the chance of running up a score: **a team that is down by four goals 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. If a team is down by **five** or more goals, the team may put a **second** additional player on the field until the goal differential drops down to four.

PARENTAL CONDUCT DURING THE GAME

Even more disturbing than 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, it is in the children's best interest.

This is the standard rule for all travel teams. We have been working to make it the standard rule for all intramural teams. Please, don't let the parents ruin their child's soccer experience!

WHEN THE GAMES END

- Teams are to line up at midfield 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 good 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 can 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 in the next game.
- Gather the players together (away from the parents) for about five 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 all of the parents know when the next practice or game will take place. After the players leave, check for any items that players might have left behind (sweat pants, jackets, soccer balls, 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 two referees for each game (one for each field). If there is no referee for one of the fields, the coaches of the two teams must find someone to referee the game or agree to each referee half the game.

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. If a player continues to demonstrate reckless play or very bad behavior, the coach should send an e-mail to the LMSC President. The LMSC Directors will step in when necessary, to deal with problems regarding out of control players, out of control parents, etc.

DEALING WITH AN INJURY

If a child is injured during a game, the referee should IMMEDIATELY stop play. Remind the referee of this if he or she fails to stop play. If the referee does not notice that a player is injured, the coaches of both teams should immediately call it to the attention of the referee so the he / she can stop play.

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. Be sure that the other players ARE NOT 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 / her to get up. If the injury appears serious, the player's parents should be waved onto the field while the player remains on the field.

The coach or some other adult (or possibly the referee) should stand next to the player in a position where his / her body will block the sun from the injured player's eyes.

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 help 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. Try to find someone with a car phone or use the phone at any house next to the field.

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

DEALING WITH AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

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).

PROPER HYDRATION

Depending on the temperature and the humidity, players will need frequent water breaks. Players should be drinking water regularly during any physical activity. Ideally, players will have started drinking water at home, before leaving for the field. Lack of proper hydration can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Be sure to keep an eye on the players, especially on hot, humid days.

CHILDREN RUNNING INTO THE STREET OR A PARKING LOT AFTER A BALL

Depending on the field where the practice is taking place, it is possible that a ball will roll into a street or into a parking lot. Be sure to SCREAM at any player who looks like he / she is going to run after the ball. Do not assume that the player is aware of the danger of this situation. If possible, have another adult near a street or parking lot to help with this.

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 any other children who might be at the field.

NOBODY should be climbing on the nets of the goals. Tell young children to get off of the goals 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 they 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 a set of trophies. These trophies are to be given out to the players at the end of their last game.

Coaches may keep the LMSC game ball, practice cones and goalie pinnies.

Coaches will be e-mailed a program evaluation form which they will be asked to fill out and return to LMSC to help the LMSC Officers make the program better in the following seasons. Many policies, rules and ideas of the LMSC program have come from the coaches. Please feel free to offer constructive criticism.

Coaches will also be e-mailed a player evaluation form. This form will enable coaches to rank their players based on skill and soccer ability. These rankings will go into the LMSC database and will be used in future seasons by the Division Commissioners to make fair and even teams. The evaluations will be kept confidential by the club.

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, 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 the 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 the player. A general rule for parents vs. kids games is to require the parents to run at half speed or less and require them to keep the ball on the ground at ALL times.

COACHING EDUCATION

There are two different national soccer organizations that offer coaching courses to help youth soccer coaches become better coaches.

The United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) both offer different level coaching courses. Some coaching courses are geared toward novice parent coaches who are coaching very young players. Many higher level courses are geared for travel team coaches, high school coaches, college coaches, etc.

LMSC FULLY reimburses the registration cost of any coaching course which an LMSC coach successfully completes. The club will send an e-mail to coaches about coaching courses or other educational opportunities that may arise during the year. LMSC also reimburses the full amount of registration for any coaching clinic that an LMSC coach attends.

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 and Nether Providence (Media area).

During the fall season, LMSC fields several boys teams in the Delco League and several girls teams in the Philadelphia Area Girls Soccer League (PAGS) in the Under 9 through Under 16 age groups. 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 each age group. Each team will be placed in a division within their league that will provide an appropriate competitive level. Older age group teams up through Under 19 are sometimes formed in the winter and spring season.

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 teams generally provide more experienced coaches, better 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. Since 1989, LMSC teams have won 41 State Championships. In 2008, the LMSC Vélez won the Region One USA Championship. In 2003, the LMSC Hammerheads won the Region One USA Championship (Region One extends from Maine through West Virginia). In 2004, the LMSC Vélez were semifinalist in the Region One USA Championships.

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 2006 World Cup as well as the 2000 Olympics. Ben played in the MLS, our nation's top professional league, for over 10 years and is now head coach for DC United.

In 1999, former LMSC player Suzie Grech was chosen as the starting goalie for the Spain Under 18 Women's National Team. In 1997, former LMSC player Jon Conway was a member of the USA Under 20 National Team. Jon played in the MLS for 12 years, including at Chicago Fire, San Jose Earthquakes and the New York Red Bulls. 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. Former LMSC player Jimmy McLaughlin is currently a member of the Philadelphia Union.

THE UNDER 8 DEVELOPMENTAL TRAVEL TEAM ACADEMY

Each year, LMSC will hold tryouts for a boys Under 8 Developmental Travel Team and a girls Under 8 Developmental Travel Team. 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 regulations. No player will be taken on the team who was 6 or 8 years old as of July 31 of that year.

In the fall, each developmental team will practice together and play games using the same structure as our Fall Intramural Program. Each team will also train indoors in the winter and play indoor league games. The teams are run under the direction of a coaching staff hired by the LMSC Officers.

The Under 8 Developmental Travel Team Academy will give our most talented players a chance to develop their skills and prepare for the actual Travel Team Program, which will start the following fall.

Tryouts for the Under 8 Developmental Travel Team Academy are held in late May or early June, before players go away for the summer. The actual season for the teams starts after Labor Day.

THE OLDER INTRAMURAL DIVISIONS

In the fall, LMSC offers intramural programs for children ages 4 - 14. Information is sent to all players on our mailing list in June. Due to field limitations, the Spring Intramural Program is only able to offer soccer to children ages 5 - 11.

THE DIVISION COMMISSIONER

Each division will have it's own commissioner who will be in charge of the following items:

DISTRIBUTION OF JERSEYS AND SCHEDULES

The Division Commissioners will need to meet with the LMSC Officers before the season to get the necessary items to distribute at the pre-season coaches meeting. This includes jerseys, schedules, rosters and game balls.

RAINOUT CANCELLATIONS

If games need to be canceled: LMSC will update the web page with a message saying that games are canceled. LMSC will also e-mail the coaches. The coaches will be asked to call or e-mail the players on their team. LMSC will also attempt to e-mail the players who we have e-mail addresses for (note: we do NOT have everyone's e-mail address).

Games which have to be canceled will NOT be made up.

COORDINATING TRADES AND SWITCHING A PLAYER TO A DIFFERENT DIVISION

The Commissioner will coordinate all player trades and switches. During the first two weeks of play, the Division Commissioner will be in contact with head coaches and switch players who request this.

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 place the player in the requested division. If this is not possible, the player will have to remain on his current team or drop out of the program.

END OF THE SEASON

LMSC will distribute end of the season trophies to each of the Division Commissioners. The Commissioner will give a set of trophies to each head coach. The coaches are to give out the trophies to the players immediately AFTER the last game of the season for each team.

Also at the end of the season, coaches will be sent a program evaluation form. Coaches will be encouraged to offer any constructive criticism about the program that they have. Over the years, many good ideas have been presented by the coaches to make the program stronger in future years.