



Southern Nevada Soccer Association

Game Management Guidelines

SNSA's philosophy for our youth recreational league is that coaches, parents and league officials work together to create a positive environment in which our kids can learn and develop a passion for the game of soccer. Coaches are the most critical component of this partnership; they serve as liaison between the league and our families, and have a direct impact on each player's experience as a participant in the league. Players and parents take cues from the coach's conduct when interacting with the referees and with the players and coaches from the opposing team. If the coach maintains control and models good sportsmanship, especially in times of adversity, the players and parents are likely to do the same. To this end, we have formulated the following game management guidelines that we strongly encourage our coaches to adopt.

PRE-SEASON/WEEKLY PREPARATION

1. **Philosophy** – clearly explain to parents the league's philosophy of creating a positive experience for our players by emphasizing player development and fun instead of the outcome of the game. Remind them that about league rules related to playing time (see Game Procedures #3).
2. **Parent Behavior** – remind parents that they are not to direct comments to the referees; the coach is the team's primary point of contact for the referees. Parents or other spectators who do not comply with SNSA's Code of Conduct may be asked to leave the field before the game can continue.
3. **Game Reminder** – please send a reminder to your parents with the time and location of your game each week.

PRE-GAME WARMUPS

1. **Location** – use disc cones to set up a warm-up area for your players away from the game field so as not to interfere with the current game; use small-area ball control and passing drills. Once the game field is clear you can move the players to the field to complete warm-ups.
2. **Supervision** – closely monitor your players at all times during warm-ups. If you will be late to the field, ask an assistant coach or parent to start the warm-ups until you arrive.
3. **Hydration** – remind your players to drink lots of fluids before, during and after the game to ensure proper hydration and avoid muscle cramps or other symptoms related to heat illness.

PRE-GAME PROCEDURES

1. **Field Safety** – inspect the field and report any safety hazards to the referee or field marshal.
2. **Equipment** – inspect your players' equipment to ensure they are wearing shin guards and are not wearing jewelry.
3. **Uniforms** – if your team's jersey color is similar to the jersey color of your opponent, go to the field marshal tent to retrieve a set of pinnies for the players on the home team to wear over their jerseys.
4. **Referee** – introduce yourself to the referee and present your SNSA ID card for inspection. Ask if any special rules are in effect (e.g., mid-half water breaks on a game day with high temperatures). For Mini Kickers/U5-U6, introduce yourself to the coach of the opposing team and determine which side of the field each of you will take to officiate the game.
5. **Game Card** – the referee will give you the game card; enter the names and jersey numbers of your players in the designated area (U7-U14).
6. **Sides of the Field** – the home team's players/spectators sit along the north or east touchline (based on field orientation). Ensure that only players and registered team officials are located in the technical area (the area equal to the radius of the center circle on either side of the halfway line). Spectators should sit or stand at least 3 yards from the touchline, between the end of the technical area and the top of the penalty area. Do not allow spectators to sit adjacent to the penalty area or behind the goal. Coaches and players should remain in the technical area for the duration of the game.

GAME PROCEDURES

1. **Substitutions** – plan to substitute your players in 4-5 minute shifts (U5-U8); 5-10 minute shifts (U9-U10); or 10-15 minute shifts (U11-U14). Substitutions can be made at any dead ball situation (kickoff, goal kick, corner kick, free kick, throw-in) WITH PERMISSION OF THE REFEREE. The attacking team may choose to return the ball to play immediately on a throw-in or free kick, in which case the referee may choose to not allow a substitution until the next dead ball opportunity. Call out "Ref sub" to ask for permission to substitute.

2. **Playing Time** – league rules require that all players who attend practice regularly and are in good standing (have not engaged in conduct detrimental to the team) receive at least half of the game minutes, or an equitable amount of playing time in cases where the number of players does not permit the 50% minimum. Referees are not responsible for monitoring playing time; we rely on the integrity of our coaches for compliance.
3. **Interaction with Referee** – coaches and parents should refrain from complaining about or persistently questioning referee calls or non-calls, and there is NEVER a justification for yelling at a referee (verbal abuse) or touching a referee (physical abuse). Coaches may politely inquire about a call or rule explanation at a dead ball or half-time break; the referee is not obligated to answer. If you believe a referee has misinterpreted a rule, consult with the field marshal, who has a full set of rulebooks at the league table. Soccer is a physical game, and not every incident involving physical contact or a player going to ground is a foul. Referees are also instructed to use discretion when calling handballs, especially for the younger ages, so as not to disrupt the natural flow of the game. If you believe a referee is not protecting the safety of the players, ask the referee mentor or field marshal to observe the game.
4. **Interaction with Opposing Team** – players, coaches and parents should refrain from making comments to players, coaches or parents of the opposing team. Report inappropriate conduct by members of the opposing team to the field marshal.
5. **3v3 Format Referees** – for Mini Kickers and U5-U6 games, one coach or designated adult from each team is on the field to officiate the game. Both adults should work together to teach the players the laws of the game; there should not be many fouls or handballs called at these ages. Use your judgment to allow the game to flow, but make corrections for obvious or persistent violations. The most important thing to remember is to make it a fun experience for the kids!
6. **Goal Guarding (U5-U8)** – coaches please refrain from allowing players to guard the goal (U5-U6) or goal area (U7-U8). Goal (area) guarding is defined as positioning a player in front of the goal (U5-U6) or at the top of the goal area (U7-U8) regardless of the position of the ball or the players on the attacking team. All players should be encouraged to move forward on attack and to drop to defend as the ball changes possession. Review Law 12 in the SNSA modified laws for the 4v4 play format for rules related to the goal area (U7-U8).
7. **Allow Players to Play** – this is a soccer game, not a video game where the coach uses a joystick to control the players! Allow your players to play the game with relatively limited instruction, especially for the U9-U14 age groups. Let your players be creative and figure out ways to solve problems during the games. Use your practices to train, and let the players play the games!
8. **Injuries** – if a player on your team suffers an injury, wait for referee permission to enter the field to attend to the player. In the case of a head injury, the player must be removed from the game and may not return to play until evaluated and cleared by a medical professional. For first aid assistance consult the field marshal. Call 911 for a serious injury requiring emergency care. Be sure to review the player safety resources included on the Coaches page on the SNSA website.
9. **Managing an Imbalanced Game** – there will inevitably be some games in which one team is much stronger than the other. Showing good sportsmanship to and empathy for an opponent are important character traits to teach our children. It is our expectation that SNSA coaches will implement strategies to keep the score down, but still respect the opponent, respect the game, and allow players to work on their skills. SNSA rules allow a team that trails by 4 or more goals to add an additional field player to improve the competitive balance of the game. We have included a list of age-appropriate tactics that coaches can use to help control the score in an imbalanced game.

POST-GAME PROCEDURES

1. **Team Hand-Shake** – at the conclusion of your game, it is customary to line up your players to shake hands with the players on the opposing team; players should also shake hands with the referee after the game. Coaches should shake hands with both the referees and with the coaches of the opposing team. The purpose of the post-game handshake is to show respect to all participants, not to make a snide comment to the referee or opposing coach.
2. **Sideline Cleanup** – ask your players and parents to clean up litter along your team's sideline, and to vacate the sideline in an expeditious manner so the team playing the next game can set up. If it is your practice to have a post-game team meeting, select an area away from the field of play.
3. **Post-game Communications** – regardless of the outcome of the game, focus on the positive in your post-game communications with players and/or parents.
4. **League Communications** – if you have concerns related to your game (referee performance, conduct of opposing team, etc.), please contact us at info@snsasoccer.com. **Do not burden your field marshal with complaints!** The role of the field marshal is to provide information and coordinate the referees. Be kind to your league officials!

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMPLIANCE WITH THESE GUIDELINES, AND FOR VOLUNTEERING TO COACH WITH SOUTHERN NEVADA SOCCER ASSOCIATION!