



## 2020 Spring Recreational Coaches Introduction

### Thanks!

Thank you in advance for your time and commitment in coaching one of the teams in our recreational program this season. We hope that your experience over the next few months is enjoyable and creates great memories for you, your child, and your family.

We put this overview together to help you work your way through the nuts and bolts of organizing and running a recreational soccer team.

If you're a new coach – we hope you can use this as a checklist to help you along through the year.

If you're a returning coach – we hope that there may be a few things in here that will enhance your experience.

For all coaches – please feel free to provide feedback to help us improve this overview for future years.

### After the coaches meeting

You will receive your roster and schedule soon after the coaches meeting. You will want to organize your team as soon as possible:

- Call all of the players' parents to let them know that they are on your team and confirm their participation. Provide your contact information in case there are issues or questions. If there are registration issues, please contact the Club Administrator as soon as possible.
- Identify one (or at most two) parents who will be able to serve as your assistant coaches.
- Set up a time and location for your parent meeting. This could be at a parent's house, at a local restaurant or meeting place, or after a practice.
- Determine your tentative practice schedule – days/times/location. Note that you will have regular academy training sessions with the club staff

### At the parent meeting

At the parent meeting, you'll need to accomplish some organizational tasks:



- Identify your team manager (“team parent”). On many teams, this parent will do the organizational part of running your team – getting sign-up lists for team tasks and communication with the team. Some teams share the team manager role between two parents.
- Explain your philosophy and expectations of the players and parents – at practices and games. UC Premier subscribes to a model of positive coaching and role modelling.
- Determine if there are any special needs or issues with the players. For example, food allergies, asthma or other issues that you need to be aware of.
- Remind all parents of their responsibility to drop off and pick up their player on-time at practices and games. In general, on-time means a minimum of 5 minutes prior to the set time. Players may not be left unattended at parks after practices or games.
- Discuss how you will handle any conflicts or issues that may arise.
- Pick your team name – often the kids will want some input.

UC Premier encourages direct personal communication between parents, coaches, and club staff. The use of electronic communication (email, text) is fine for setting up meeting times, etc, but should be discouraged as a means of problem solving when/if issues occur.

## At practice sessions

Practice sessions are the environment where players have an opportunity to learn and grow with your guidance and support. Within the practice session, you are the “teacher” and the players are your “students”.

UC Premier encourages creativity at all ages. We look for players that are risk takers, who are willing to try clever ideas and who may fail but will learn from their failures.

The players are there because they want to have fun. Our job as coaches is to channel their enthusiasm and energy in a positive way within the framework of the lessons we are trying to teach.

Perhaps the single most important thing that you can do to make your practice successful is to be organized:

- Have a practice plan in mind (or better, as a note in your pocket) before you get to practice. Consider how you will move from one activity to another and where you will take water/rest breaks – especially important on hot days.



- Arrive 10-15 minutes early to get yourself organized and set up any cones, goals, etc that you will need.
- Greet players as they arrive and have a “welcome” game/activity ready for them.
- Always remember that the players are there to play soccer – they want to learn from you, but they want to dribble the ball, score goals, and run around. Make sure that you structure your teaching (talking) to convey information and then step back and let them play.

It is important that you have some flexibility in your plan. Sometimes, things won't work out the way that you expect. For example, you may have planned to teach a particular skill – requiring you to explain the skill – but when you get to the field, it turns out that the wind is howling and the players can't hear you. In that case, you may need to change your plan to use drills that allow the players to learn through playing rather than through your voice. Another example: it may be a very hot day and the intensity session you planned won't work. You'll need to incorporate more breaks or scale back the ratio of playing-to-coaching. And another example: you may have several players sick or absent – when you planned for a practice that requires the full team. On those days, consider working more on individual skills rather than team play.

There are days when some (or all) of your players are not following your plan. In general, if the issue is 1 or 2 players, you will need to deal with a “discipline” issue. Sometimes, a quick talk with the player on your expectations - what you're doing and what you need from them - will quickly solve the problem. In younger age groups, you may have players who have maturity/attention issues – and you'll need to think about how to engage them.

If the problem is a substantial percentage of the team, you'll need to ask yourself some questions about the session:

- Are the players bored – are they looking for a new challenge?
- Are they standing around – for example waiting in lines or listening to you talk rather than playing? The players are there to play.
- Are they confused?
- Is there something else going on? For example, there are some situations which are going to distract your players – the first day of school or the last day before a vacation, a team sleepover, something distracting in the environment (for example, an ice cream truck or puppy or something else).



Every coach, at every level, has had a practice that bombed for some reason. Don't get hung up on one bad practice – if it becomes a habit, you should look to the UC Premier coaching staff for advice. Remember, on those tough days, you always have the option of letting the players scrimmage and then making coaching points in the game.

## At games

The weekly games are the opportunity for your players to show their skills off in front of their parents and to challenge themselves against an opponent. Although everyone wants to win – and winning is generally more fun than losing – it is important to keep your perspective about what it means to “win”.

As a club, the UC Premier culture is that “winning” is about more than the number of goals that each team scores. “Winning” includes:

- Seeing your players take the skills and ideas you are working on in practice and trying them in games.
- Learning how to be a member of a team and to work toward common goals.
- Expressing sportsmanship within the team, with opponents, and referees.
- Teaching your players life lessons – how to win gracefully, how to lose with dignity, and how to deal with and overcome adversity.
- Learning from failure to create new achievements.
- Taking pride in being a member of UC Premier and representing our community.

As a coach on game-day, you are a role model for your parents and players. When something goes wrong, think about how you want others to feel about your response. Consider how your communication – voice and body language – will be received. Try not to get “caught up” in any one moment and remember to look at the bigger picture.

UC Premier encourages players to learn to play different positions on the field – especially at younger ages.

We look at our recreational players to advance to higher levels of soccer – competitive and high school soccer – as they move through the club. We look for our coaches to give players the opportunity to try different positions – including goalkeeper – in order to encourage personal growth.



When communicating with your players – especially when trying to correct errors – look for positives:

- Try to avoid the words “don't” and “never”.
- Explain what they doing well, explain your correction, give them the chance to respond.
- Ask your players questions about what they did and why – help them to learn the game through their own thought process.
- Try to avoid being the “joystick” coach – let the players make decisions on the ball rather than telling them at every phase what to do and not do.

Celebrate the positives – especially when they do something you worked on in practice. Praise can be a very strong motivator.

Many coaches use a substitution strategy where they will move players around during the game until the last 5-10 minutes where they will use the players that have shown the most success in the match in the positions where they have the most success.

Make sure that you give all of your players sufficient playing time. On some teams, an assistant coach will keep track of individual playing time and remind the head coach if someone is short.

**Note that every player in the UC Premier recreational program is guaranteed a minimum of 50% playing time.**

Most of your team's parents will keep track of their child's playing time. Unless they are watching your practices, their primary vantage point is at the Saturday games. Hopefully at your parent meeting, you've established the ground rules for communicating with you and how you determine playing time and positions. It's important that you stay consistent with this during the season.

***If there is an issue with a player that you feel should alter the guaranteed minimum playing time – for example, attendance, behavior – please coordinate with the UC Premier Rec Director prior to taking any action.***

## Dealing with your child

Perhaps the biggest challenge of being a parent coach – for many parent coaches – is dealing with your child. If you are like most parents and children, there will be days on the soccer field when things aren't working. Here are some ideas and observations, the result of many years of coaching children:



- Your child's behavior and results in practices and games is not a reflection on you.
- Your child is on her own journey. She will have good days and bad days. She is looking to you for guidance and support.
- Try to create boundaries between "Mom/Dad" and "Coach". Consider leaving your issues with your child's behavior/play on the soccer field. It is easy as an adult to use the car ride home or the dinner table to try to "fix" your child's soccer problems. This can cause resentment in your child, taking away their "fun" and leading to burnout.
- It is often a challenge to deal with your child in practices/games – some coaches will (unintentionally) treat their child specially, other coaches (in order to avoid this) ignore their child. Children will sometimes "work" their parent/coach in practice. Consider using your assistant coach to help you manage your child (and vice versa).
- Consider instructing your child to call you "Coach" at practices, in order to reinforce the boundary. This also sends a message to the other players that your child will not be treated specially.
- Be aware of your choices of position and playing time for your child in games. Do not "hold" your child back but also be aware that the parents on your team expect a level of fairness in the treatment of all of the players.

## Finally...

Have fun. It is hard to imagine, especially when your children are young, but they grow up very quickly. As a volunteer coach, you have the chance to spend time with your child and help shape their experience. In addition, you will be impacting the lives of their teammates who will carry your experience with them through their lives.

Don't forget to smile and laugh.

UC Premier wants you to be successful. A list of contacts is below. Please feel free to let us know if we can help.

## Contacts

[Programs, curriculum, coaching](#)



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