



SOCCER SIDELINE ETHICS

*DC Stoddert Soccer League encourages you to enjoy youth soccer for what it is—**youngsters having fun.** Coaches, parents, and spectators should be role models of good behavior on the sidelines. Help create a positive soccer atmosphere. Support your youngster's soccer experience by following these "Soccer Sideline Ethics."*

1. THE FUN IS PLAYING

Encourage youngsters in skill development and 100% performance. Winning is not their motivation. They want to be having fun. So lighten up, decrease the competitive pressures, and encourage skills, teamwork, self-esteem, and good sportsmanship. Enjoy this opportunity to be with your youngster on the field.

2. KNOW THE GAME AND THE LAWS

Soccer looks simple but it is complex to play, coach, and officiate. You'll enjoy the game more by understanding soccer skills and tactics, the flow of play, and how the game is played. Soccer is free flowing with ever-changing situations and constant problem solving by the players. Soccer is physical and demanding. With few timeouts, it is fun to watch. And there are only 17 Laws. Understand the basic laws and increase your enjoyment of the game.

3. SUPPORT THE TEAM, NOT JUST YOUR YOUNGSTER

Give encouragement to the entire team. Don't be constantly yelling at your youngster. Don't ever give instructions. Soccer is above all a player-dominated game and they have to make the decisions on the field. Always be positive, win or lose. Don't get over involved. Applaud good play by either team.

4. PRACTICE GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

Always show your sportsmanship and enthusiasm. Young people learn by example. Encourage your player to play by the rules. Cheer good play by both teams. Ask your youngster: "Did you have fun and try your best?" rather than "Why didn't you win?" Win gracefully, not boastfully. Lose without being negative. Make sure the end-of-the-game rituals (like the handshakes) reflect good sportsmanship.

5. LET THE PLAYERS PLAY

Soccer--a players' game. Youngsters participate for their enjoyment, not ours. Playing is more important than winning to children, while winning is more important to parents and coaches. Emphasize player development and having fun over winning.

6. LET THE COACHES COACH

Your coach, volunteer or paid, provides guidance, skill instruction, and supervised fun for your youngsters in soccer. Respect the coaches and their decisions. Their concern is the whole team, not just your player. They need your support. Don't undermine, second-guess, or criticize a coach in public. Most coaches will listen to parents in private, and may ask you to help with practice.

7. LET THE REFEREE JUDGE THE GAME

Soccer referees control the game the moment they enter the grounds. Most are young and learning, like the players. They respect fair play, sportsmanship, skill, and the spirit of the game. Referee calls are final. No player, coach, or parent ever changed a ref's decision, but the criticism disrupts the game. Support the referees.

8. GET INVOLVED WITH SOCCER

Come to the games in the spirit of fun and play. Meet other parents and coaches. Make sure your youngster comes ready to play—both equipment and attitude. Help them develop the skills and tactics for the game. Go to a pro or college game, or watch a game on TV. Kick the ball around with them. Soccer isn't easy to play, so don't criticize your player for losing or making mistakes—applaud good effort.

9. BE A SUPPORTIVE SOCCER PARENT

Volunteer to help with practices or transportation. Soccer teaches discipline and responsibility, so be on time! Support the coach in any way possible. Be more concerned with your player's long-term development of skills and tactics than with short-term winning and losing. Focus on skill accomplishments and effort.

10. THEY'RE ONLY KIDS. IT'S ONLY A GAME

Allow your child to be a child. Kids see soccer as fun, learning new skills, emulating heroes, being on a team, gaining success by touching the ball, and just being involved. Soccer can teach skills for life, building character, self-esteem, and awareness of others. There's no such thing as a loss if players do their best. You'll see wonderful progress if fun and skill development are your priorities.

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