

## **You signed up to coach Kickers... Now What.**

First off I would like to introduce myself. I am Jase Humphrey and I am the new coaching director, what that means is that I am your resource for practice tips, answering your coaching questions, and helping with any issues and problems that may arise. I have been coaching Kickers for the last 15 years, and have coached everything from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to Boys High School. If I don't have the answer to your question I will be sure to find it. One of the tasks that we have decided to implement is providing more resources for our coaches that include some things some of our experienced coaches may take for granted. This document is really designed to just give you a basic walkthrough of what you should do after you agree to be a coach.

Our administrator Barb Kamber has likely already directed you to complete your background check, and given you a code to complete you F license training. If you haven't done these 2 steps, do them now. These are important steps in the coaching process, and the F license will provide you not only a quick overview of coaching fundamentals but will provide you with a resource for drills, practice concepts, and how to develop players over the course of several seasons.

So now the fun begin.

**Contacting your Team:** As coach your first major task is to setup practice time and inform your team. There is no real right or wrong way to do this. You can hold a team meeting, or a team email conversation and figure out what time works best for your team, or you as the coach can set practice time as to what fits into your schedule. If you are coaching K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade I would suggest that you keep practices to once a week, and no longer than about an hour. As your players age, their ability to remained focused, and to benefit from practice increases, but throwing to much at them or over practicing leads to higher dropout rates from players. On your contact roster you should have email addresses and phone numbers for each players. I personally start with emailing the players, and asking them to respond that they received it as an intial contact, and then follow up with phone calls to anyone who didn't respond, but if you are more comfortable with placing phone calls that works too. If you have players on your roster that you are unable to contact please let myself or our administrator know and we can try to help out.

**Practice Time and Location:** Kickers tries to place players on team from the same geographic areas as much as we can, late registrations, specific requests, and just our basic enrollment numbers sometimes makes this impossible, but we do try. This allows the coach to find convenient practice locations closer to the team residence. City parks are often first come first serve for open spaces to practice, many of the schools will allow you to use areas (contact the school secretary to check for availability), and you can reserve field space at the Kickers fields starting March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8am. The city is hoping to have the Kickers park open for practices by March 28<sup>th</sup>, but field conditions have been known to move this date back in the past.

**Asking your parents for help:** While we would love to be able to assign every team a group of coaches or at least a head coach and an assistant coach we always run short of volunteers. We know coaching a group of 12 kindergarteners is a daunting task for any person, and even as they age help is always nice. In my experience coaches generally do better of getting parents involved than request from us as an organization. In plain wording, ask your parents for help. Anything from developing the drink and snack schedule for your team (Any team from K though 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> this seems to be the norm) to recruiting parents to help assistant coach, or just being a bench Mom or Dad on game days. The younger children thrive on their parents being involved, and the more help you have the easier your job is. Be specific with what you need and hopefully someone will step up to help.

**Develop and practice plan:** So now you have handled most of the administrative stuff, you have a practice time, you have a practice location, and your team all knows where to be; so what are you going to do at your first practice. Here is the most important tip I can give you after 15 years at this.... Have Fun. The players will learn more, you will be less stressed, and the season will run much smoother if you are having fun. With the younger ages especially the less time spent standing around in lines, or listening to long instructions the more they will get out of practice. My older teams have gotten used to longer periods of conditioning, but just don't have them run, engage them, and interact with them while they are doing it. The more interesting an activity the more fully they will buy into it. I can't hand you a ready-made practice plan, because every team is different and every player on the team is different. Figure out your team, what works and what doesn't, and focus on what you think you can accomplish in the time you have. Celebrate all the little improvements, and don't fixate on the mistakes.

**Uniform Distribution:** This is one of the most frustrating aspects of coaching, and one of the most complained about things from parents. I will briefly explain how we order uniforms for our teams of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders and up, and then tell you how I found handing out uniforms works best. We tried everyone order what size uniform your player needed on the registration form, and found that some parents don't know their players size, or growth spurts, or countless other things wound up making it so the

uniform just didn't fit. We have gone to ordering full uniform sets from our uniform distributor, and what this means is they send us a range of uniforms that should fit the average 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade team, or the average 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade team. What this means is not everyone is going to get a uniform that is custom fit to their size. Here is how I go about handing out uniforms: I line up my players at the first practice from shortest to tallest and then I start with the largest number, which will always generally be the largest uniform and I just hand them out down the row. This should mean that the smallest player gets the smallest uniform, (and they may be swimming in it) but the largest player will get the largest uniform (hopefully that means it isn't too tight). This system isn't perfect, but it is the best we have come up with over years of experimentation. The coaches need to be sure to make sure that they hand the player the same size jersey and shorts, I suggest sorting them after you get them and putting them in uniform kits, it is never good to get an Adult small jersey and a Youth small shorts. If you coach K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade uniforms are easy, the traditional red and white reversible jerseys can be purchased at the North Concession stand for \$15.00, and we accept cash or check.

**Game Day:** You have survived through the first part, you have got your equipment, everyone has been contacted, you have had a practice and everyone has their uniform, it's time to actually play a game. The most important tip I can give you about game day is to be early. Showing at your field 5 mins before the game or even worse late puts you in an unwanted stressful situation, aggravates parents, and leaves you scrambling to wrangle you team into line to get checked in. If you show up 15 mins early, advise your team to show up 15 mins early (some will always still be late), it gives you time to warm up, and be ready when it's time to check in with the refs.

Whether you prefer to use an electronic version (on your phone or tablet) or a paper version (from your packet) it is required that you have a copy of the roster to hand the Referee at check in. Only Kickers players on your rosters are allowed to participate. And only rostered players are allowed on your teams bench or sideline.

There is no right or wrong way to do substitutions, you can plan everything out in advance, you can make substitutions on the fly, you can change at quarter breaks for the younger ages, this is your decision to make; with one caveat. We require you follow the rules. Each player must play at least 50% of the game, and all substitutions are with the consent of the Referee.

We know that soccer is competitive, and being such players and coaches can become consumed with winning and losing. We do not keep score in Leagues K-2, and I know from experience the players will make up their own score as they go along. I suggest that coaches focus on this as a teaching moment, and remind their players that we don't keep score, and that we don't talk about the score on the field or on the bench in the younger ages. This is a good rule to follow even for the older ages where we keep score. It should be the coach's responsibility to worry about the score. We are out here for fun, and enjoying the game, and displaying good sportsmanship is much more important than the final score.

Teach your team how to win and lose gracefully. We pride our league on sportsmanship and displaying a love of the game. Players are young and they will learn what you teach them or show them on this matter. The better the job we as coaches do of teaching sportsmanship, the better our players will exhibit it. On this matter I will remind you, our refs are human, they are going to miss calls, and make mistakes. There is never any instance where it is ok to threaten a referee. I understand being upset with what you think was a missed call, but losing your cool as a coach sets a bad example. If you think your game was officiated incorrectly come talk to me, and then the referee director and I will look into the matter and attempt to provide training and support. Our referees are learning much the same way that your players are learning, most of our referees are also players in our leagues.

As far as scores, it is the winning coach's responsibility to report the score to the concession stand. We will have score sheets at the South concession, find your game on the appropriate day, and record the score.

**End of the Season:** So you have made it through an entire season now, and hopefully you and your players have learned some, and most of all have had fun. On the last weekend of games we ask that you return your equipment to the north concession stand. Feel free to throw out any balls that are no longer usable, and provide us with any feedback that you may have.

**Contact Me:** If you are having any issues, if you just can't solve a practice problem, a game problem, or anything else regarding your coaching experience contact me. I will be at the fields every Saturday for the duration of the games, you can email me at [coachingdirector@ickickers.org](mailto:coachingdirector@ickickers.org) and I will be happy to provide any assistance I can. I will try to make practices if you want me there, I can come to games, and I can provide addition resources or instruction if you want. We as an organization want you to enjoy the experience of coaching, and are trying to provide you with every resource we can to succeed.