



SPORTSMANSHIP AT MONTCLAIR UNITED SOCCER CLUB: PARENT SUPPORT & SPECTATOR GUIDELINES

The Montclair United Soccer Club (MUSC) operates to develop soccer skills and team concepts in youth players. Our focus is based on the theme that “Kids Come First”, and we recognize the value of helping youngsters:

- Develop ability
- Acquire team spirit
- Learn the game
- Set objectives and strive toward them
- Become sports participants
- Build character
- Gain personal confidence and pride
- And -- most of all – have fun

Primarily, it is the responsibility of the Club’s coaches and trainers who work with the children to make this come true. The winning of games is really only one focus of the play – It should not be allowed to become the measure of success. In addition to coaches and trainers, parents and spectators must contribute to the accomplishment of these goals.

Parent Support

As with any educational experience, parents can have a huge positive influence on a child's involvement in soccer. We recommend parents follow these guidelines to support the players:

- Encourage good training habits at home
- Encourage fair play
- De-emphasize winning and losing. Children are naturally competitive and will choose how to compete at their age.
- Be supportive -- be sure the player attends practices; pick her/him up on time
- Ensure that the player and parent support the coach's and referee's decisions
- Be open and available to communicate with the coach

Regarding games, **the following guidance might help parents and spectators contribute to the children’s experience:**

- Soccer is a game involving great freedom for the players. Attempts to control the action on the field from the touchlines (sidelines) are the opposite of what is intended for the sport and are often counterproductive. Parents and other spectators should not belly-up to the line or run up and down the field along with the play. While a "coachable moment" may be used to instruct players, players generally benefit most from appreciative fans and coaches who can wait until practice to teach.
- Soccer is a game of physical contact and one in which fouls are sometimes overlooked or missed. There are times when a player of low skill but good strength will prevail against a skilled opponent by strength and/or size alone, particularly in the younger age divisions.
- Soccer is a game that is given to the referee to control. This control applies before, during and after the game and applies to both the players and adults. Most calls made by the referee have to do with the ball going off the field. The referee’s ability to make these calls is often done with the assistance of linesman. However,
- The referee is also responsible for calling fouls and not all of them are obvious. For instance, when a player is fouled and the ball goes to a teammate, the referee has the option of not stopping play to give a free kick to the team already in possession. A foul must be both intentional and advantageous to the fouling team before the referee stops play. This is a difficult concept for the new spectator to grasp.

- Remember, a league soccer game is a contest of teams, not an extension of practice time. There are no time outs, no bending of the laws to help a badly losing team, no punishing to fit the crime, no covering up for bad behavior by apologizing to the referee.
- Player attitude and sportsmanship is a direct reflection of adult leadership. Players who are a credit to themselves and their club, are made that way. While arousal of players is valued in boxing, American football and rugby, it is detrimental to sports like soccer where skill and judgment are paramount.

The rules of Montclair United Soccer Club for spectator conduct:

Good sportsmanship is a critical objective for the Club both on and off the field. MUSC may consider disciplinary action against coaches or teams who have fan behavior problems. The players, spectators, referee or linesman should not be subjected to poor behavior from the sidelines. If necessary, a referee may abandon a match due to the conduct of spectators. Our youth deserve the best competition in the best sporting environment.

Some specific do's and don'ts:

- Parents, relatives, friends and other spectators, including parents serving as linesmen, **are not to coach players!** You will confuse, distract or frustrate the player. You may also be contradicting a coach's instructions.
- Spectators **are not to yell** to any children (it may seem odd, but even too much positive reinforcement can be a problem), as well as at/to a coach, the referee or parents of the other teams.
- Spectators, players and coaches should stand back at least 5 feet from the touchline (that's what a sideline is called in soccer). This space is important because it conveys a sense of detachment from the field of action.
- If the referee does not get the cooperation of those at the game, i.e. conducting themselves in a sporting manner, the referee may abandon the game and report the circumstances to both the league and MUSC, resulting in a forfeit and fine.

Concerned parents should contact the Club and utilize its resources to address issues that may arise involving a particular team. Initially, you should work with a team's coach and/or trainer. However, if you think the issue is not being addressed, MUSC has both Town and Travel Committees that oversee and manage the Club's programs. Members of these Committees are available to parents as another avenue for communication. We also have a sportsmanship committee that addresses egregious displays of bad sportsmanship. Should an issue arise involving the team on which your son or daughter plays, please discuss the matter with the coach or manager of the team, the Town or Travel Committee and/or the Sportsmanship Committee (See web site for contact email addresses/ phone numbers @ Montclairsoccer.com)