



# **Coaches Handbook**

## **Nashville Youth Soccer Association**

v. 2.1 – Spring 2012

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## Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to coach this season at Nashville Youth Soccer Association (NYSA). The main objective of NYSA is to make available a good place for children to learn and play soccer!

This handbook has been designed to help coaches during a typical soccer season at NYSA. It does not answer every question or resolve every issue that may arise, but coaches are encouraged to use it as a guideline throughout the season.

NYSA will communicate primarily with coaches via email or the NYSA website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)). During periods of inclement weather, it is advised that coaches regularly check the email address which is listed with the league.

Coaches are asked to handle disputes quietly and allow the board to help with unruly parents and spectators. Coaches will be held responsible for unruly actions and/or the misconduct of his players, parents and unruly spectators. A coach shall not verbally abuse or demean a player for any reason. Coaches will ensure that players, parents and spectators follow the rules of NYSA.

NYSA welcomes coach suggestions for improving the league, the soccer experience for our children and items to include in future versions of the *Coaches' Handbook*. If you would to make suggestions regarding the league or the handbook, please send comments to [info@nysa-soccer.org](mailto:info@nysa-soccer.org).

# League Administration

## Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of NYSA oversees of the administration of the league. Contact information for the Directors may be found on the NYSA website: [www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org). There are currently several open positions. If you are interested in joining the NYSA Board, please contact any board member or send an email to [info@nysa-soccer.org](mailto:info@nysa-soccer.org).

Commissioner	Director of Fields
Assistant Commissioner	Director of Safety & Security
Secretary	Director of Special Events & Volunteer Services
Treasurer	Director of Concessions
Registrar	Assistant Director of Concessions
Director of Coaches (U4 – U8)	Referee Assignor
Director of Coaches (U11 – High School)	Referee Training & Development
Director of Community Relations	Web Page Developer & Coordinator
Director of Player Services	Board Member-at-Large
Assistant Director of Player Services	

## Contact Information

League Phone Numbers:	(615) 268-6349 (615) 944-4271
Web Address:	<a href="http://www.nysa-soccer.org">www.nysa-soccer.org</a>
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:info@nysa-soccer.org">info@nysa-soccer.org</a>
Postal Address:	Nashville Youth Soccer Association P.O. Box 140454 Nashville, Tennessee 37214
Rain Out Phone Line:	(615) 541-9120
Social Media:	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/NYSASoccer">www.facebook.com/NYSASoccer</a> <a href="https://www.twitter.com/NYSASoccer">www.twitter.com/NYSASoccer</a>

You may contact the league via phone, postal mail or email; however email is the best way to contact the league.

## **Coach Requirements**

The Tennessee State Soccer Association (TSSA) requires that all coaches and assistant coaches complete a risk management volunteer disclosure statement and that a background check be completed. The TSSA has moved this process from paper forms to an online form on a secure server. Coaches may access the link entitled "Risk Management Volunteer Disclosure" from the TSSA web site ([www.tnsoccer.org](http://www.tnsoccer.org)), or you may access the Disclosure directly at: <https://onlinereg.leagueone.com/rm/RmDisclosure.aspx?O=9027&I=28>.

It is required that coaches complete the online Disclosure Form within 48 hours of the coaches meeting and before the first practice. However a disclosure statement must only be completed once a year.

NYSA must register every player with TSSA. NYSA sends those registrations to TSSA as teams. If the individual listed as the official "coach" for a team has not completed the disclosure, TSSA requires removal of that individual as coach.

## **League Rules**

NYSA operates Heartland Soccer Park by proxy of the Nashville Metropolitan Board of Parks and Recreation. No pets, firearms or alcoholic beverages are allowed at Heartland Park. Please advise your parents of these rules.

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association, known worldwide by its acronym FIFA (pronounced fee-fah), is the international governing body of football (soccer) and the largest sporting organization in the world. NYSA follows FIFA's Laws of the Game. The Laws of the Game may be found on the FIFA website ([www.fifa.com/worldfootball/lawsofthegame](http://www.fifa.com/worldfootball/lawsofthegame)).

Modified rules are in place for U4 - U11 age divisions. U12 and above follow all FIFA rules. This handbook contains basic rules for each age group. Please find the complete list of modified rules on "League Rules" page of the NYSA website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)). It is advised that you download a copy of the modified rules for the age group you are coaching and then copy and distribute those rules to your parents.

NYSA operates a recreational league, which means that score is not kept, there are no playoffs and all players must play a minimum of half the game. U4, U5, U6 and U8 division teams practice one day per week. Teams in the U11, U15 and High School divisions may practice 2 times per week, but the total practice time is not to exceed 3 hours per week.

Coaches may not practice or play any player not assigned to them by the league. There are no exceptions to this rule.

No coach at any time shall use obscene or profane language to any player, parent or referee. Coaches shall not discuss publicly or privately with spectators or parents in a derogatory or abusive manner any play, decision or the coach's opinion of the officials before, during or after the game. Coaches may not speak to referees during the game unless the referee initiates the conversation.

If a coach has a question, he/she should wait until half time or the conclusion of the game to ask the referee.

Teams will be assigned a date and time to work in the concession stand during the season or a time to work during the end of season celebration on the last day of the season. The scheduled time will not conflict with your soccer match. If your team's concession stand or celebration obligation is not fulfilled, the result will be the loss of the coach's player registration fee.

At the end of the season, NYSA will refund the player registration fee for the coach's child. However, if the coach decides to coach the following season, the registration fee rolls to the next season. The registration fee will continue to rollover for as long you are coaching. If you coach for one season and decide not to coach the next season, but your child is playing the next season, you may roll the fee.

If you have more than one child playing at NYSA, you may only roll the registration fee for the child you coach. If you happen to coach twins, you may only roll the fee for one child. If you coach more than one team, you may roll the fee for each child you coach.

NYSA will not hold the fee should you decide not to coach for a season. The fee must be refunded or rolled at the end of the last season you coach, or the fee will be lost.

Please note that coaches must complete a hardcopy of the registration form for the coach's rollover, since the online registration system requires payment to complete the registration process.

## **Age Divisions**

NYSA divides and assigns players to teams according to age. The birth dates for age groups are divided by year with the beginning and ending dates being August 1 and July 31.

For example, for the 2012 Spring Season, the birth date range for the U6 age division is August 1, 2005 through July 31, 2006. Children with a birthday falling between those dates may play in the U6 Division during the 2012 Spring Season. The years defining an age group will change with each fall season, so that children will play in the same age division during the fall season and following spring season.

Occasionally, parents may choose to have their child "play up" an age division. NYSA allows children to play up in an older age division. However TSSA rules do not allow children to "play down" an age division.

Before registering a child in an older age group, NYSA asks that parents and coaches carefully consider each individual child's development. Some children are more skilled than others in their age group, but skill does not guarantee success in an older age group. One must also consider the child's maturity level. Not all children mature at the same rate. While the skill level between some age divisions may seem minimal, the maturity level can be vast.

Before moving a child into an older age group with children who may be two or even three years older, please carefully consider the child's individual skill and maturity level.

## Season Timeline

- Coaches Meeting: receive roster, uniforms, sign code of conduct and submit online Volunteer Disclosure form
- Contact Parents/Players: contact players within 3 days receiving your team roster
- Practices: teams may begin practicing as soon as the Monday following the coaches meeting
- Games: each season is a 10 week season
- Picture Day: occurs during season; pictures will be available for pick up the Saturday following picture day; parents may see pictures before purchasing
- Rain Outs & Make-up Games: if games are cancelled due to weather, coaches must contact opposing coaches to schedule make-up games; coaches must submit the make-up game schedule to NYSA for approval and for assigning the referee(s)
- End of Season Celebration: pick up medals and other information for players prior to start of last game and complete the Coach Rollover Form

## Uniforms

NYSA orders a complete uniform (jersey, shorts and socks) for each player registered. Uniforms will be given to each coach at the coaches meeting. NYSA orders sets of uniforms for each team in each age division. Each set contains the same number of small, medium, large, etc. uniforms for the age division. In other words, each U8 team will have the same number of youth medium jerseys and shorts, the same number of youth large jerseys and shorts, etc. NYSA cannot place additional orders for individual players.

It is suggested that the day coaches give uniforms to players, lay out each complete uniform by size from smallest to largest. Then line up players up from smallest to largest and give them the corresponding uniform.

If a roster is not full, save the larger uniforms for a player added to the team at a later date. It's much better for a uniform to be too large than to be too small.

## End of Season

Each season NYSA provides participation medals to all players. These medals are distributed to coaches on the last game day of the season. Parents and coaches may choose to purchase trophies or another memento for their teams; however NYSA will not pay for those items.

NYSA plans a celebration for the last day of each season including activities, such as games, inflatable rides, concession stand discounts, etc. Coaches may give medals and trophies to the players after the last game at Heartland Fields or they may choose to plan a team party away from Heartland Fields. Please note that participation medals may not be available to coaches until the last day of games for the season.

NYSA also requests coaches complete a "Coach Rollover Form" prior to the end of the season. These forms can be obtained at the field registration table during early registration. The form is a way of telling the league if you do or do not plan to coach again and if the league should refund the registration fee you paid or roll it to the next season. A form can also be found at the end of this handbook.

## Code of Ethics & Conduct

I hereby pledge to live up to my certification as an NYSA Coach by following the NYSA Code of Ethics:

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.
- I will promise to review and practice basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players.
- I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.
- I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.
- I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of each sport that I coach, and I will teach these rules to my players.
- I will use those coaching techniques appropriate for all of the skills that I teach.
- I will remember that I am a youth sports coach, and that the game is for children and not adults.
- I agree to contact parents on my roster within the next 3 days to inform them of the team practice schedule and my contact information.
- I agree to complete the required Risk Management Volunteer Disclosure within 48 hours of the coaches meeting.
- I agree not to practice any player not assigned to my team by the league.

## What is a Good Coach?

A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports.

A good coach is someone who goes to work early, misses meals, gives away weekends and plays havoc with family schedules so he/she can help a group of youngsters.

A good coach is someone who stays a half-hour after practice or longer to make sure every one of the players has a safe ride home.

A good coach is someone who rarely has a mom or dad say, "Hey, Thanks!" but receives a lot of advice on game day.

A good coach is someone who makes sure everyone gets to play.

A good coach is someone who knows what to do if a player gets hurt.

A good coach is someone who teaches young people that winning isn't everything, but still lies in bed at night staring at the ceiling wondering what might have been done differently to have turned a loss into a win.

A good coach is someone who can help a child learn to take mistakes in stride.

A good coach is someone who sometimes helps a child develop ability and confidence that sometimes did not exist before.

A good coach is someone a youngster will remember a long time after the last game has ended and the season is over.

### **A Parent's Perspective on a Good Coach:**

Parents have ideas of what makes a good coach, for example, patience, tolerance and sportsmanship to name a few. To get a perspective from an American "soccer mom," check out the article "[Good Coaching](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/newsletter12.htm)" by Lori Reynolds posted on [www.footy4kids.co.uk/newsletter12.htm](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/newsletter12.htm).

## **Team Organization**

All coaches are encouraged to establish lines of communication with parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This orientation usually takes place during the first practice. The information for parents may be put into an email or letter, but face-to-face communication is often preferable. Let parents know during this meeting how you will primarily communicate with them, whether it is email, in person, telephone, etc. Also let parents know how you will communicate with them in case practices or games are cancelled.

Communication with parents is important because it gives them the opportunity to get acquainted with you, informs them about the nature (and risks) of the sport, informs them of league requirements for the team and allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.), among other things.

When first contacting parents on your roster, make sure they know the day and time of the first practice, and let them know of required or recommended equipment. All players should come to practice and games with soccer cleats (not baseball or football cleats as they have toe cleats), the correct size soccer ball for the age group (U4-U8: size 3, U11: size 4, U15 and above: size 5), shin guards and water bottle.

Take time at the beginning of the first team practice to introduce yourself to parents and players, introduce players to one another and distribute handouts such as, practice and game schedules or modified rules for the age group.

During the first practice, ask for volunteers to be assistant coaches, team parents and concession stand workers. Your team will be assigned a time to work in the concession stand during the season or assigned a time to work during the end of season celebration on the last day of the season. If the team's concession stand/end of season celebration obligation is not fulfilled, the coach's player registration fee will not be rolled over to the next season, nor will it be refunded.

## **Team Responsibilities**

NYSA asks that you leave the practice and game facility in the same shape that you found it. Please pick up and dispose of trash in the trash cans provided in various locations on the fields.

Benches are provided for players to use during practice and games. The benches are not intended for parents or spectators. Please ask spectators to bring chairs. If you or a parent moves a player bench during practice, return it once practice is over. Do not move benches from player areas during games.

Teams will be assigned a date and time to work in the concession stand during the season or assigned a time to work during the end of season celebration on the last day of the season. As coach, you are not responsible for working in the concession stand, but you are responsible for finding volunteer workers from your team. As stated previously, if your team's concession stand/end of season celebration obligation is not fulfilled, the result will be the loss of the coach's player registration fee.

## Parent Responsibilities

In addition to team responsibilities, let parents know of their responsibilities as soccer parents at NYSA. Some of the parent responsibilities include:

- Transporting the child/children to and from practice and games on time
- Being supportive of all the players
- Helping the child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- Focusing on mastering skills and having fun, not winning
- Attending games and cheering for the team
- Working in the concession stand or during the end of season celebration when the team is assigned that duty
- Refraining from criticizing the opponents; being positive with all players
- Respecting the referees (They will make mistakes, but they are doing their best. If you feel you are better qualified, or would like to volunteer as a referee, please see the NYSA Referee Assignor.)
- Refraining from coaching your child during games (Try to understand and respect the difference between the roles of the coach and parent)

## First Aid

By accepting the role of coach, you are taking on responsibility for the care and safety of your players. Although parents and children share in that responsibility, it is your job to help the kids practice and play as safely as possible.

Coaches at NYSA are not required to be CPR or First Aid certified. We only ask that you be able to perform very basic first aid, the same that you would perform on your children at home. A First Aid kit is located in the concession stand. It is stocked with basic supplies such as small bandages, anti-bacterial cream, sting relief cream, etc.

In the event of an emergency, the best option is to call for help. Some Board members are trained and certified in CPR and First Aid, so call for a Board member, or call 911.

For convenience, you may want to keep a few small bandages with you. It is amazing how a small bandage can "heal" the "worst wound" on a child. Although that last statement was made in jest, remember that most children only need a little sympathy and comfort when they are hurt.

Your job as coach is to recognize an injury if and when it happens, keep the situation calm and call for help if necessary.

## **Practice Guidelines**

NYSA does not assign practice days or times to teams. Each coach determines the practice days and times for his/her team. However we have found that most teams practice one evening per week with practices usually lasting about an hour in length (depending on the age group).

All teams must practice at the NYSA fields, and you may not practice anyone who is not assigned to your roster by the league.

### **Planning**

Planning is the key to having successful practices. Your practice planning should begin before you first get together with your team and should continue throughout the season as you plan for each practice.

### **Practice Day & Time**

Decide the day and time you will practice. Younger teams should limit practice to about 45 minutes to 1 hour per week. Per the NYSA rules, U4, U5, U6 and U8 division teams practice one day per week. Teams in the U11, U15 and High School divisions may practice 2 times per week, but the total practice time is not to exceed 3 hours per week.

Remind parents that each player should bring cleats (not baseball or football cleats because they have toe cleats), the correct size soccer ball for the age group (U4-U8: size 3, U11: size 4, U15 and above: size 5), shin guards and water bottle to all practices.

Make sure to take plenty of water breaks on very hot days. Don't forget to take water breaks during cold weather too. Proper hydration is very important for all athletes.

### **Utilizing Parents**

Identify one or more assistant coaches from the parents on your roster. Assistant coaches are extremely valuable. They make it possible to divide players into smaller groups so that each player gets individual attention, especially as roster sizes increase. Parents who would like to help but feel they lack the necessary skills should be encouraged to attend practice to help gather stray balls, wrangle kids or volunteer as Team Parent. It is often nice to have additional helpers, especially working with younger players.

### **Weather Contingency Plans**

Prepare a bad weather contingency plan. Inform your players and parents at the beginning of the season whether you will practice in the rain or cancel practice if it's raining. Even if you practice in the rain, you should not have practice when conditions are dangerous, for example when there is lightning or if the field has become too wet to permit safe play. If you must cancel practice due to adverse weather, have an organized plan to inform parents.

Please note that NYSA doesn't let a little rain stop us from playing soccer. We will only cancel games or close fields for practice in the event of a thunderstorm or if there is standing water on the fields. Also, we do not cancel games due to cold weather. During

cold weather games, players are encouraged to wear sweatpants, a sweatshirt or jacket and even a hat and gloves. Please keep in mind that sweatshirts and jackets must be worn underneath jerseys.

The Commissioner will make the decision to cancel games in the event of inclement weather. If the decision is made to cancel games, NYSA will post on the front page of the NYSA website, send out an e-mail to the entire league and update the message on the rain out line. NYSA will also try to send updates via Facebook and Twitter. NYSA will make every attempt to have the decision made and the notices posted and distributed by 8:00am on Saturday morning. The phone number for the rain out line is 615-541-9120.

If the weather is questionable and you don't see an e-mail or a notice on the web site or rain out line closing the fields, assume that all practices and games will take place as scheduled. Please note that the website will not be updated with daily field closings. An e-mail will be sent to the league and the rain out line will be updated in regard to practices. NYSA will also try to send updates via Facebook and Twitter.

### **Practice Objectives**

The two main objectives for any soccer practice are:

- 1) to have fun**
- 2) to learn to become better soccer players**

In order to achieve the second objective it is important that you develop teaching goals for the season before you start. Don't let setting goals for the season scare you. Depending on the age group, your main goal for the season may be to have your team dribble toward the correct goal without you telling them or not taking the ball away from a teammate.

The coaches' meeting is scheduled two weeks before games begin, so you should have about two practices before the first game. Since you will not have time to teach everything during the first practices, choose topics you want to focus on and build your practices around those topics.

Some of the topics you might consider include (depending on the age group):

- |                        |                             |                      |                     |                     |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ <b>Rules:</b>        | Kick-off<br>Offside         | Throw-in             | Goal kick           | Corner kick         |
| ▪ <b>Conditioning:</b> | Speed                       | Endurance            | Strength            |                     |
| ▪ <b>Techniques:</b>   | Dribbling<br>Passing        | Trapping<br>Juggling | Heading<br>Shooting | Turning<br>Tackling |
| ▪ <b>Goalkeeper:</b>   | Catching<br>Punching        | Throwing             | Punting             | Diving              |
| ▪ <b>Tactics:</b>      | Positions<br>Defensive wall | Crossing             | Marking             | Support             |

You don't have to teach your team all the tactics that are suggested above. Be realistic in setting your objectives and goals for the season. Consider the age and experience of your players, and then set your priorities for the season. What are the things you want to cover

before the games begin, and what are the things you want to continue throughout the season?

Use the game ideas featured at the end of this handbook during your practice. Games can teach your players the same techniques without it becoming a boring drill or lecture.

### **Basic Coaching Concepts for Younger Children (U4-U8)**

**Coordination and Basic Motor Skills** – Very young children (three to five year olds) are learning to coordinate and control their body movements. They are learning to balance and are generally not very nimble or agile. Work on activities that develop basic motor skills. Games with and without the soccer ball will be beneficial and fun for all young children.

**Contacting the Ball** – There are six surfaces (inside, outside, instep, sole, toe and heel) used for kicking, dribbling or controlling a soccer ball. For most U4-U8 players, the toes and the laces (instep) are the most commonly used surfaces. Practice activities to encourage players to use different parts of their feet and ask them to “imagine” new ways to kick and dribble the ball.

**Dribbling** – Dribbling the ball is probably the most important soccer skill at any level. Use games that encourage players to dribble, stop and turn the ball. Work on moving in different directions with the ball under control.

**Passing** – It is important to encourage beginners to control the ball so that passes (or dribbles) are attempted with a purpose in mind, rather than as a means of kicking the ball to safety. However, not all players will pass the ball – especially younger players – for fear they may not get it back. Keep this in mind as you teach passing.

**Shooting** – A player’s first thought should always be “Can I score a goal from here?” Coaches should encourage shots from various distances and angles. Coaches should teach players that the objective of the game is to score more goals than the other team in the time allowed. Soccer games and other activities with no stated “outcome” are less motivating than activities that provide a way to win.

**Ball Control** – Time, space and repetition are the most important elements for improving comfort level on the ball. Small-sided games and one-player/one-ball activities provide opportunities for young players to begin associating the techniques of dribbling and controlling the soccer ball. Younger players will rarely try to control balls coming out of the air, and bouncing balls often present problems as well.

**Heading** – Four, five and six year olds will not head the ball. You may have a child who will try to head the ball because they have seen older players do it. Encourage the effort if it happens, but don’t push it if they are not ready.

**Support** – Young players should not be restricted in their movements on the field. Passing to other players should be encouraged, although dribbling the ball is the most likely way to advance the ball for younger children. Limiting players to a particular area of the field does not allow for the natural emergence of supporting positions and angles that become so important for positional play in later years.

Spaces versus Positions – For all players under the age of six, positional coaching of any kind is irrelevant and detrimental to their fun, enjoyment and progress. Rather than be told what position to play, young players should be encouraged to “find” new supporting positions away from teammates so that passes can be made.

Defending – “Defending” for younger players should be no more complicated than encouraging players to get the ball back when the ball is taken away. Players will often transition from offense to defense and move back towards their goal naturally, but it is also true that young children will often stop playing when the ball is lost. When the ball comes near them, they will become involved again. Because players should be encouraged to move forward when attacking, there will be many situations when no one is on defense when the opposing team gains possession. Understand that this is a part of the game and one reason why scores are generally much higher in small-sided games.

Transition – When the ball turns over from offense to defense or from defense to offense, the game offers chances for players to demonstrate awareness of two very important concepts: regaining possession of the ball and counter-attack to goal. Players should be encouraged to react as quickly as possible to any change in possession.

Creativity – Because four, five and six year-olds are learning to coordinate game activities with body control, “creativity” is more likely to be seen as good ball control or faking movements. Players who can change speed and direction and retain control of the ball are applying techniques in a creative way. Players who can move their bodies from side to side in an effort to “fake out” a defender are showing signs of creativity. Players who experiment with different parts of their feet or control the ball with different body parts are showing signs of creativity. Players who shoot at the goal from various distances and angles are showing signs of creativity. Allowing children to think and to create their own solutions to the game’s problems is a critical element of coaching.

## Game Etiquette

Both teams will share the same side of the field, also known as the bench or player side of the field, during games. Please note that the benches are for our players, not spectators. If you move a bench during practice, please return it to the correct side of the field once practice is over.

Only players, coaches and referees should be on the bench/player side of the field. In addition, no one is permitted to sit or stand at the ends of the fields near the goals. Only one assistant coach or team parent may sit on the bench with the players.

Parents, friends and family should sit on the side of the field that is opposite the players. Also, spectators should sit at least three feet from the sidelines so that the referee may clearly see the sidelines and so that the players have room to throw/kick the ball into play.

For U4 & U5 age groups, the coach will be on the field with the players during the game. For U6, the coach will be on the sideline. The coach may move up and down the entire sideline during the game. The coach may not move around the end line to help with corner kicks or goal kicks. For U8 and above, the coach must stay on his/her end of the sideline inside the coaches' box (the area between the center line and the penalty area).

After the game, it is encouraged to line up your squad and lead them in shaking hands and congratulating the opposing players and coach. Although score is not kept at NYSA, players are usually aware of the outcome of the game. Teach your players to win humbly and to lose graciously.

## Laws of the Game

NYSA follows FIFA's Laws of the Game. The Laws of the Game may be found on the FIFA website ([www.fifa.com/worldfootball/lawsofthegame](http://www.fifa.com/worldfootball/lawsofthegame)). Modified rules are in place for U4 - U11 age divisions and may be found on the "League Rules" page of the NYSA website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)). U12 and above follow all FIFA rules.

There are basic rules for all age groups. For example, there is no slide tackling in the U4 – U8 age divisions. Also in the U4 – U8 divisions, all free kicks are indirect, which means that a player taking a free kick may not score directly from the kick. The ball must touch another player (offense or defense) before going in the goal. If the ball goes into the goal directly from the kick, the opposing team will be awarded a goal kick. Beginning with the U8 division, penalty kicks can be awarded.

All items of jewelry are strictly forbidden and must be removed prior to the start of the game. Jewelry is defined as necklaces and bracelets, rings, piercings (of any kind), leather bands, rubber bands, etc. Players may not play with hard hair clips, beads or large bows. Soft "scrunchies," ponytail holders and short ribbons are allowed. The referees will inspect teams prior to the start of the game. Players will not be allowed to play until they are in compliance. This rule applies to all age groups.

### League Rules for U4

In the U4 division, NYSA's goal is to teach the game of soccer in its most basic form. The coach objective for the U4 division is to teach players to kick the ball, kick the ball toward the correct goal, introduce the "team" concept and teach player not to foul other players.

In the U4 division, players use a size 3 soccer ball. The field size is 30 yards long by 15 yards wide. The goal size is 5 ft wide by 4 ft high by 3 ft deep. There are no goalkeepers in this age division. Coaches may substitute players only at the quarter breaks unless there is an injury, for which substitutions may occur at any time with the permission of the referee. All players should play at least ½ the game.

Three players and the coach may be on the field during games. The coach or anyone filling in for the coach on the field must be at least 18 years of age. Only one parent or assistant coach may sit on the bench with the players during the game.

The game is divided into 4 equal quarters of 6 minutes each. A 2 minute break will take place between the first and second quarters and between the third and fourth quarters. A 5 minute break will occur between the second and third quarters. The teams will play the same direction the entire game.

Basic fouls for U4 include handballs, tripping, pushing or any other excessive, dangerous or violent conduct directed at another player. Players in this age group are still learning how to control their bodies. They can have balance issues causing them to bump into players while running during a game. The referees are aware that young children may bump into other players and will call fouls with the understanding of the age of the players. Problems occur when players purposely push, trip or otherwise foul opponents in order to gain possession of the ball. Actions such as these will be called fouls. When a player commits a foul, the opposing team will be given the ball at the spot of the foul. This is called a "free kick."

Probably the first rule of soccer is “do not touch the ball with your hands.” In older age groups using one’s hands becomes part of the game; however in U4 no player should use his or her hands. Picking up the ball or simply touching the ball will be called a handball. At the end of this handbook is a list of games which can be played during practice. Included in those games are game ideas to teach players to use other parts of the body instead of the hands.

The touchline is also known as the sideline on a soccer field. The end line is the line that designates the end of the field. The goal sits on the end line and the goal line is the line at the end of the field between the goal posts. If the ball crosses the touchline, end line or goal line, the ball is out of play. The ball must completely cross the line to be out of play. If the ball touches the line but does not completely cross it, the ball is still in play.

Usually when the ball crosses the touchline, a throw-in would be awarded. There are no throw-ins in this age group. If the ball is kicked out of bounds on the touchline, the team who would have the throw-in will be given a free kick at the spot where the ball crossed the touchline.

A goal kick is awarded when the attacking team kicks the ball over the end line without scoring a goal. The defending team will receive a free kick and may kick the ball from anywhere within the goal area. The opposing team must be 5 yards away when the goal kick is taken.

A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team when the defending team kicks the ball over their end line without kicking it into the goal. The corner kick may be taken anywhere within the corner arc. The ball is in play when it is kicked and the ball moves.

Referees may allow players multiple opportunities if the corner kick or kick-in is improper. For example if a player kicks the ball and the ball does not go back into play, the player will be allowed to try again.

A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the goal line. The opposing team will be allowed to kick-off from the mid line to restart play.

Only a partial list of rules for the U4 division is listed above. Please download a complete copy of the modified rules at the NYSA website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)).

## **League Rules for U5**

The same rules apply for U5 that apply for U4. However, there are modifications that are more appropriate for players in the U5 division. The goal of NYSA is to introduce new concepts to players as they move to older age divisions.

In the U5 division, players use a size 3 soccer ball. The field is 40 yards long by 20 yards wide. The goal size is 10 ft wide by 5 ft high by 3 ft deep. There are no goalkeepers in this age division. Coaches may substitute players only at the quarter breaks unless there is an injury, for which substitutions may occur at anytime with the permission of the referee. All players should at least ½ the game.

Four players and the coach may be on the field during games. The coach or anyone filling in for the coach on the field must be at least 18 years of age. Only one parent or assistant coach may sit on the bench with the players during the game.

The game is divided into 4 equal quarters of 8 minutes each. A 2 minute break will take place between the first and second quarters and between the third and fourth quarters. A 5 minute break will occur between the second and third quarters. The teams will switch goals at halftime.

Throw-ins will be taken in the U5 division to restart play when the ball goes out of play across a touchline. The thrower must face the field when delivering the ball and each foot must be behind the touchline or each foot may touch part of the touchline. Players may not lift either foot off the ground when delivering the ball. After delivering the ball, the thrower may not touch the ball until it has touched another player (either team). A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

A goal kick is awarded when the attacking team kicks the ball over the end line without scoring a goal. The defending team will receive a free kick and may kick the ball from anywhere within the goal area. The opposing team must be 5 yards away when the goal kick is taken.

A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team when the defending team kicks the ball over their end line without kicking it into the goal. The corner kick may be taken anywhere within the corner arc. The ball is in play when it is kicked and the ball moves.

Referees may allow players multiple opportunities if the corner kick or throw-in is improper. For example if a player lifts his foot when taking a throw-in, the player will be allowed to try again.

On all kick-offs, free kicks, goal kicks and corner kicks, the player kicking the ball may not touch the ball again until another player (from either team) touches it. It is the coach's responsibility to teach this concept to players. Referees may allow multiple attempts when a deadball restart is improper.

Only a partial list of rules for the U5 division is listed above. Please download a complete copy of the modified rules at the NYSA website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)).

## **League Rules for U6**

Basic rules for the U4 and U5 divisions also apply to the U6 division. However, modifications have been made and new concepts are introduced in the U6 division.

In the U6 division, players use a size 3 soccer ball. The field is 40 yards long by 20 yards wide. The goal size is 10 ft wide by 5 ft high by 3 ft deep. Teams will play with goalkeepers in this age division. No player may play more than one quarter of a game in the goalkeeper position. Coaches may substitute players only at the quarter breaks unless there is an injury, for which substitutions may occur at anytime with the permission of the referee. All players should play at least ½ the game.

Four players and a goalkeeper are on the field during games. The coach must stay on the sidelines in the U6 division. The coach may move up and down the entire touchline during

the game. The coach may not move around the end line to assist with corner kicks. One parent or assistant coach may sit on the bench with the players during the game.

The game is divided into 4 equal quarters of 10 minutes each. A 2 minute break will take place between the first and second quarters and between the third and fourth quarters. A 5 minute break will occur between the second and third quarters. The teams will switch goals at halftime.

Goalkeepers are the only players allowed to touch the ball with their hands. The goalkeeper may pick up or touch the ball anywhere within the goal box. However, if the goalkeeper touches the ball with his hands outside the goal box, it is a handball and the opposing team will be awarded a free kick at the spot of the infraction.

Only a partial list of rules for the U6 division is listed above. Please download a complete copy of the modified rules at the NYSA website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)).

### **League Rules for U8**

Basic rules for the U4 through U6 divisions also apply to the U8 division. However, modifications have been made and new concepts are introduced in the U8 division.

In the U8 division, offside, penalty kicks and yellow and red cards are introduced. However, any penalty occurring outside the penalty area will result in an indirect free kick.

In the U8 division, players use a size 3 soccer ball. The field is 50 yards long by 30 yards wide. The goal size is 12 ft wide by 6 ft high by 4 ft deep. Teams will play with goalkeepers in this age division. No player may play more than one half of a game in the goalkeeper position. Coaches may substitute players only at the quarter breaks unless there is an injury, for which substitutions may occur at any time with the permission of the referee. All players should play at least ½ the game.

Five players and a goalkeeper are on the field during games. The coach must stay on the sidelines between the midline and the goal box in the U8 division. Only the coach and one assistant coach or team parent may sit on the bench with the players during the game.

The game is divided into 4 equal quarters of 12 minutes each. A 2 minute break will take place between the first and second quarters and between the third and fourth quarters. A 5 minute break will occur between the second and third quarters.

The offside rule conforms to FIFA law.

If a player deliberately passes the ball back to his or her own goalkeeper and the goalkeeper touches the ball with his or her hands, the result is a handball. The opposing team will be awarded a free kick. The goalkeeper is allowed to kick the ball if passed back from a teammate.

In accordance with FIFA rules, yellow cards (warnings) and/or red cards (ejection from the game) may be issued to a player by a referee. If a player receives two yellow cards or one red card in a single game, the player will be ejected from the game. The team may not replace the ejected player with a substitute; they must continue the game playing one player short during the quarters the offending player would have played. If a player

receives a red card, he/she will be required to sit out the next game played. The offending player should attend the next match and sit on the bench with his/her teammates.

There is absolutely no sliding or slide tackling in the U8 division. Sliding is defined as leading with the feet when going to ground. Any player who commits the foul of sliding will immediately be shown a yellow card. A goalkeeper who goes to ground to block a shot is not sliding. A goalkeeper will only be called for sliding if he is running and then slides to tackle or block a shot.

A penalty kick will be awarded for a defensive handball inside the penalty area or in the discretion of the referee if a foul is committed to prevent a goal scoring attempt.

### **League Rules for U11**

In the U11 division, players use a size 4 soccer ball. The field is 70 yards long by 50 yards wide. The goal size is 21 ft wide by 7 ft high by 5 ft deep. Substitutions conform to FIFA regulations. All players should play at least ½ the game.

Eight players and a goalkeeper are on the field during games. The coach must stay on the sidelines between the midline and the goal box in the U11 division. Only the coach and one assistant coach or team parent may sit on the bench with the players during the game.

The game is divided into 2 equal halves of 30 minutes each. A 5 minute break will occur at the half. All other rules conform to FIFA law.

### **League Rules for U15**

In the U15 division, players use a size 5 soccer ball. Ten players and a goalkeeper are on the field during games. The coach must stay on the sidelines between the midline and the goal box in the U15 division. The game is divided into 2 equal halves of 35 minutes each. All players should play at least ½ the game.

The field size, goal size and all other rules conform to FIFA law.

### **League Rules for High School**

In the High School division, players use a size 5 soccer ball. The coach must stay on the sidelines between the midline and the goal box in the High School division. The game is divided into 2 equal halves of 45 minutes each. All players should play at least ½ the game.

The field size, goal size and all other rules conform to FIFA law.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **When are games played?**

Games are played every Saturday during the season. Depending on the number of players registered (and the number of teams), games are usually scheduled between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm.

### **What is the make-up game procedure if games are rained out?**

In the event that games are cancelled due to rain, the coaches of the teams scheduled to play each other should get in contact with one another to schedule a make-up game. Most seasons make-up games cannot be scheduled for Saturday mornings, but in most cases they can be scheduled for Saturday afternoons or weekday evenings.

To request a referee for a make-up game, please send an e-mail to the league at [info@nysa-soccer.org](mailto:info@nysa-soccer.org) with the age division, date and time of the scheduled make-up game. NYSA cannot guarantee that a referee will be available, but we will make every effort provide one. Due to work and/or school schedules of our referees, it is much easier for NYSA to provide referees for Saturday afternoon games than it is for a week-day evening game. If a referee is not available, please have an assistant coach or parent serve as referee. You may ask someone from each team to referee the game.

### **Do you keep score?**

Since NYSA is a recreational soccer league we do not keep scores or standings. We strive to teach our children good sportsmanship and how to play the game of soccer.

We know that realistically a child who can count will probably know the score; however do not encourage them to announce it to the team, or the opposing team. If they ask you if they won you should ask them "Did you have fun?" If they answer "yes" then that is all that is important.

### **How do I find a specific field for a game?**

Included in this handbook is a map of our fields. A map of our fields is also posted at the Concession Stand and on the NYSA website. If you should have any trouble finding a specific field, a Board member or a referee will be glad to direct you to the proper field.

### **Where should I park on game day?**

NYSA is very pleased to have plenty of paved parking for our players and their families. Please see our map of the fields to view the parking areas.

Please DO NOT park cars on the street or in the coves - the Metro Nashville Police department will ticket and/or tow your car. Also, DO NOT park cars in front of the double gates. This is the only way to get Emergency Vehicles onto the fields.

## Basic Soccer Terms

One does not need vast soccer knowledge to coach at NYSA. In this section, some basic soccer terms are defined to help increase your knowledge. This is by no means an exhaustive list of terms, but terms you may hear at NYSA. Coaches may find more soccer terms online or in soccer coaching books.

### Abbreviations

NYSA: Nashville Youth Soccer Association

TSSA: Tennessee State Soccer Association

USYSA: United States Youth Soccer Association

FIFA: Fédération Internationale de Football Association (international governing body of soccer)

### The Field

Field: the rectangular area where soccer matches are played

Pitch: a British term for field

Goal: <sup>1</sup>structure consisting of two posts, a crossbar and a net into which all goals are scored; <sup>2</sup>when a ball crosses the goal line into the goal a point is awarded

End line: the line running along the width of the field and runs across the front of the goal

Goal line: the line running along the width of the field directly between the goal posts

Sideline: also known as the touchline; the line that runs the length of the field on each side

Center line: also known as the half line, the midfield line or the mid line; the line that divides the field in half along its width

Center circle: a circular area with a set radius in the center of the field from where kickoffs are taken to start or restart the game

Center spot: the spot inside the center circle from where all kickoffs are taken

Penalty area: a rectangular area in front of the goal with its edge on the goal line; the goalkeeper may use his hands to play the ball only inside this area; during a penalty kick, players may not enter this area before the kick is taken

Penalty spot: the spot within the penalty area in front of the center of the goal from where penalty kicks are taken (penalty kicks are only given in U8 and older age divisions)

Penalty arc: a circular arc whose center is the penalty spot and extends from the top of the penalty area; it designates an area that players are not allowed to enter prior to a penalty kick

Goal box: also known as the goal area; the rectangular box in front of each goal with its edge on the goal line from where goal kicks are taken

Corner arc: a quarter-circle located at each of the four corners of the field from where corner kicks are taken

Corner flag: the flag located at each of the four corners of the field

Coach's box: also known as the coach's area; area defined by NYSA where coaches are allowed during the game; there is no coach's box for U4 and U5 age divisions since the coach is allowed on the field with the players

Player's area: also known as the bench area; area defined by NYSA where players who are not playing sit during the game

## **Positions**

Goalkeeper: also known as goalie, keeper or net-minder; the player positioned directly in front of the goal who tries to prevent shots from getting into the goal; the only player allowed to use his hands on the field although only within the penalty area

Defender: also known as fullback or back; the players on a team whose primary job is to keep the opposing team from scoring goals

Midfielder: also known as halfback; the players who play in the midfield region of the field who link the defensive functions and the offensive functions of a team

Forward: also known as attacker or striker; the players who play in front of the rest of the team near the opposing goal and are usually responsible for most of the team's scoring

## **Officials**

Referee: makes sure the game is played according to the rules of soccer, specifically the rules of FIFA and the FIFA-modified rules of NYSA; responsible for starting and restarting play, tracking time remaining and citing fouls; they wear a uniform that distinguishes them from both teams

Center ref: the referee in charge of the game in the U11 and older age divisions

Linesmen: also known as the assistant referees; the referees who assist the center ref by running the sideline on each half of the field to assist in citing fouls, offside calls and substitutions

Fourth official: official used occasionally at NYSA on the sideline to assist the other referees with substitutions and in the coach's and player's area

## **Fouls & Punishments**

**Foul:** a violation of the rules for which a free kick is given to the opposing team

**Advantage rule:** a clause in the rules that directs the referee to refrain from stopping play for a foul if a stoppage would benefit the team that committed the violation

**Dangerous play:** an action by a player that the referee considers dangerous to that player or others

**Obstruction:** a foul in which a defensive player, instead of going after the ball, illegally uses his body to prevent an offensive player from playing it

**Offside:** a violation called when a player in an offside position receives a pass from a teammate; it is not a violation for a player to be in an offside position; a foul will only be called when the offending player becomes involved in the play or interferes with an opponent; please consult the FIFA Laws of the Game for a more detailed explanation of offside and when a player may or may not be called in violation of the offside rule

**Offside position:** an attacking player positioned so that he is closer to the opponent's goal than both the ball and the second-to-last opposing player; a player is not offside if he is exactly even with either the ball or second-to-last opponent; please consult the FIFA Laws of the Game for a more detailed explanation of the offside position

**Free kick:** a kick awarded to a team after a foul has been committed by the opposing team; the player kicks a stationary ball without interference from the opposing team; all free kicks in the U4-U8 age divisions are indirect kicks, except for penalty kicks in the U8 age division

**Indirect free kick:** a free kick usually awarded for a "less-serious" foul committed by the opposing team in the U11 age division and above; a goal can only be scored from indirect kick after it has touched another player whether on the same team or opposing team

**Direct free kick:** a free kick awarded for a "serious" foul committed by the opposing team in the U11 age division and above; a goal can be scored directly from this kick without it touching another player

**Penalty kick:** a free kick taken from the penalty spot by a player against the opposing goalkeeper with all other players standing outside the penalty area and penalty arc; penalty kicks are only given in U8 age division and above

**Yellow card:** also known as a caution; a yellow card that a referee holds up to warn a player for dangerous or unsportsmanlike behavior; two yellow cards to the same player in one game earns the player an automatic red card

**Red card:** a red card that a referee holds up to a player to signal his removal from the game; usually presented for violent behavior or multiple rule infractions (i.e. receiving two yellow cards)

**Sending off:** an ejection resulting from a player being shown a red card; at NYSA when a player is sent off or receives a red card, the player may not play the remainder of the

match, the team must continue a player down and the player may not play in the next match; the player should attend the next match and sit on the bench with his teammates

### **Starting and Restarting Play**

Goal kick: a restart of play where the ball is kicked from the goal box away from the goal; the kick is awarded to the defending team when a ball that crosses the end line was last touched by an attacking player

Corner kick: a restart of play where the ball is kicked from the corner arc in an attempt to score; the kick is awarded to the attacking team when a ball that crosses the end line was last touched by a defending player

Kickoff: the method of starting a game or restarting it after each goal from the center spot

Drop ball: a method of restarting the game where the referee drops the ball between two opposing players facing each other

Throw-in: a type of restart where a player throws the ball from behind his head with both hands while standing with both feet on the ground behind a sideline; awarded to a player on the team opposite the team that last touched the ball before it crossed the sideline

## Soccer Coaching Games

Most of the games listed in this handbook are for children in the U4-U8 divisions. However, the games can be modified for older children. For more drills and game ideas for older children, please visit the Links & Resources tab on the NYSA Website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)).

Remember that the kids aren't showing up to play soccer; they're showing up to have fun. Have fun with them!

Younger children love the idea of a "new" game, so it is a good idea to change the rules of the game or change the game every 10-15 minutes in order to keep interest. Break instructions into little steps, and keep them very brief. If you cannot explain the game and demonstrate it in about 20-30 seconds, then change it and do it in stages ... demo part 1, then move on to part 2, etc.

The key to soccer games/drills is for each player to have a touch on the ball and include every player. Choose one aspect of the game (dribbling or shooting or passing or defending or goalkeeping) and build the rest of your practice session around that aspect.

### Warm Ups

Although it's not necessary for younger children to stretch before exercise or physical activity, you might consider starting each practice with a stretching workout. Beginning each practice with stretching also helps build a routine for the kids to let them know that is time to play soccer.

Just do simple toe touches (don't bounce while you're in the stretch) and then reach high "to the sky." Let them roll the ball through and around their legs in a figure eight pattern. Then sit down with legs straight out in front with a ball between your feet. Reach over to grab your toes, hold the stretch for a few seconds and then beat the ball like a drum.

Have players sit with their legs together stretched out in front. Roll the ball on top of the legs to toes and hold. Then roll the ball back up the legs. With legs in a "v," roll the ball along the outside of one leg, across the foot, down the inside of one leg to the inside of the other leg, around the foot and along the outside of the leg. Reverse the direction.

There is no need to spend a lot of time stretching, but it is a good exercise to keep the kids from getting restless until all the players have arrived or until you're ready to begin practice.

For older players, introduce dynamic stretching which are stretches that involve motion. Examples of dynamic stretching are walking lunges (make sure the front knee does not bend beyond the toes), high knee jog, high knee skips, straight leg kicks while walking and gluteal kicks (kicking heel up to the bum).

Older players can also do simple jogging around the field, half field or from one sideline to the other. Give them a ball and have players dribble around the field. Encourage players to run as a team, where all the players try to stay together. Emphasize that it is not a race and to not run at full speed. You may have to explain that jogging is a slow run.

## **Freeze**

This drill teaches younger or new players to stop when they hear the referee's whistle and it helps older players (and the coach) with conditioning. Younger children may need you to say "freeze" during games to help them remember to stop at the whistle.

All players line up on the end line or goal box line. The coach blows his whistle signaling the players to run. The coach blows his whistle again signaling the players to stop or "freeze." The coach repeats this until the players have made it to the end of the field.

*Variation:* The coach allows the players to chase him continuing to blow his whistle signaling them to either run or stop. As the coach makes turns in the field, the players must follow. Let the players freeze in funny poses. If the coach wants a bit of a workout, run backwards.

## **One on Your Bum, Two on Your Shoe**

This game teaches players to use different body parts to control the soccer ball instead of hands. The players must stop or cover ball with the corresponding body part. "One" is your bum (or bottom), so players will sit on the ball. "Two" is your shoe, so players will stop the ball with the foot. "Three" is your knee, so players will kneel down to stop the ball. "Four" is the floor, so players get on all fours to cover the ball, but don't use hands! "Five" is staying alive, so have the kids (and coach) do their best *Saturday Night Fever* disco-inspired dance.

The coach will yell: "One on your bum!" or "Two on your shoe!" or "Three on your knee!" or "Four on the floor!" or "Five you're stayin' alive!"

Begin with players standing in a line until they are familiar with the phrases and corresponding body parts. Later have the players dribble around the field until the coach yells out a phrase.

## **Cops and Robbers**

Have the kids (each with a ball) line up on one side of the field. These players are the "robbers." Have two players (the "cops") facing the robbers somewhere near halfway to the other side. The object is for the robbers to dribble to the other side without having a cop tackle the ball away. If a robber loses his ball to a cop, he goes to jail (designate a small area off to the side or use the goal box). Have the robbers repeat the crossings until there are only two left. Make these guys the new cops, pull everyone out of jail and start over.

*Variation:* For very young children, I created a version of this game called "Dragons." Have one or two dragons try to kick the ball away from the players as they dribble across the field. This version of the game focuses more on defending than dribbling.

## **I am the King/Queen!**

The coach (the King or Queen) stands in the center circle (the throne). The players start on the sideline or goal box. As the players are dribbling, the coach yells, "I am the King! Bring your ball to me!" Each player dribbles to the circle and passes his ball to the King. The

King kicks the ball back into the field, and the player must get the ball and return it to the King. Keep kicking the ball several times in different directions.

### **Easter Egg Hunt**

Have more balls than players. Take the balls and spread them around the field. The balls are the "eggs." The players line up across the front of the goal or edge of the goal box. The goal will be the "basket." Blow the whistle and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get all the eggs in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, so they aren't allowed to take a ball away from a teammate. Time them to see how fast they can get all the eggs in the basket or remove the balls from the basket and throw/roll them back into the field to keep the game going longer.

### **I Can Do Something, Can You?**

Line up the players on the center line, goal box or one sideline of the field. Start by saying "I can do \_\_\_\_\_, can you?" Demonstrate what you can do with the ball, i.e., tap it with my right or left foot, kick with my left foot, kick it in the goal with one kick, etc. Keep in mind that younger children are still working on balance, so standing with one foot on the ball will be an accomplishment for some.

As you progress through the season, let a player lead this game. Players want to impress their coach, and it gives you a chance to see what they've learned throughout the season.

### **Cone Knockdown**

Have the players stand on the center line, goal box or one side of the field. Each player has a ball. Set up cones around one half of the field. On your whistle, players dribble around the area and try to knock over cones with the ball. Once all the cones have been knocked down, ask the players to set them all up.

*Variation:* Change it by making the players have to dribble around the area without hitting a cone. If a player knocks over a cone, have them do 5 jumping jacks or 1 pushup or run to the goal and back.

Players stand on the sideline and throw in the ball. Have them try to knock over the cones with the throw. Have an assistant coach or another player stand on their knees in front of the player taking the throw in order to get more height on the throw.

### **Turn Around**

This is a good U4/U5 game to teach players (especially new players) to turn with the ball to go the opposite direction and to get them listening for the coach's voice.

Have players stand in a line on the goal box with a ball at their feet. On the coach's signal, a player begins dribbling down the field. Coach says, "Turn around." Then the player must turn and go the other way with the ball. Coach continues to tell player to turn around and then let the child dribble to the end of the field and take a shot at goal.

Start with only one player at a time dribbling and then allow two players and then three to dribble at the same time. This will also help them to learn to dribble around other players.

## **Shark Attack**

This game is designed to teach kids with the ball to shield it from an opponent and teaches kids without the ball how to take it away from an opponent. Use cones to create a 15-yard square or use one half of the playing field. One player, the shark, starts outside the square without a ball. All other players, the minnows, start inside the square with a ball. When the coach yells, "Shark's getting hungry!" the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the fish start dribbling around inside the square. Then the coach yells, "Shark attack!" At that time, the shark enters the square and has 30 seconds to send as many balls as possible outside the square. When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the corresponding fish must leave the square and stay out until the coach gives the "Stop!" command at the end of the 30 seconds. A fish has done well if still alive. The shark has done well if few fish survived. Choose a new shark and continue the game.

*Variation:* Once a minnow has his ball kicked out of the area, the minnow then becomes a shark. However before becoming a shark, the player must run and touch the goal before he can enter as a shark.

## **Sharks and Minnows**

Mark off a large grid with cones or use a half (or whole) playing field. Divide players into two groups. Give a ball to each player in one group. These are the minnows. The other players do not have a ball. These are the sharks. The sharks try to steal the ball from the minnows by either kicking the ball out of the playing area or into the goal. If a minnow has his ball taken away, have him run and touch the goal and then retrieve his ball to become a minnow again.

## **Big Bad Coach**

Mark off a playing area with cones or use a half of the playing field. Each player has a ball. The players dribble around the playing area. The coach attempts to kick the player's ball out of the grid. If a player's ball is kicked away or the player dribbles outside the area, she must bring the ball back into the area and stand with the ball on her head and her feet spread apart. She can only get back into the game when a teammate passes a ball through her legs. Coach starts at 20% speed and increases speed as the players become more comfortable with the game.

*Variation:* Player can only use his left foot, right foot, outside of the foot, etc. to dribble.

## **Trick or Treat**

I like to use this game as a relay game. Divide players into two or three teams and set up cones on the center line for each team. Try to split teams so that one team does not have all the most skilled or fastest players.

Have one or two adults stand at the goal holding cones. On the coach's signal, players dribble to the goal and shoot. If the player scores, he/she says, "Trick or Treat." The adult gives the player a cone and the player runs back to his/her team with the cone and the next player in line dribbles to the goal. If the player misses the goal, the player must return to his team without a cone. When all the cones are gone, see who has the most.

This allows the players to work on dribbling the ball, controlling the ball and shooting the ball. It also encourages players to dribble and run at full speed.

*Variation:* If you don't have cones, construction paper works just as well. My team liked it when I made them put the cone on their heads as they ran back to their team.

On the coach's signal, players dribble to the goal, stop the ball with a foot on it, say "Trick or Treat", take a cone from an adult, turn the ball, and dribble back to the center line.

Mark out a square with cones or use the goal box and have players line up on the sides of the box. Have the adult stand in the middle. The players must dribble to the adult, stop the ball with a foot on it, say, "Trick or Treat," dribbles back to the side of the box or continue to the other side of the box. This version requires dribbling at speed, avoiding the clump in the middle and controlling the ball around an opponent.

## **Numbers**

This exercise is good for 1 vs. 1 dribbling skills for younger players. It is especially good on a hot day as the kids defending can rest a bit. Divide players into two groups of even numbers if possible. Assign each child a number, so that each team has a number 1, a number 2, etc. Try to make sure the kids with the same number are evenly matched in skills, speed, etc. Set up two very wide "goals" with cones or use the goals on the fields. Spread the kids on each end across each end line or goal box line. Call out one or more numbers, and those kids come out to play 1 vs. 1, 2 vs. 2, etc. The other players stay on the goal line as defenders. Throw a ball from the sideline into the center of the field and let them play it until a goal is scored, the defenders stop it or it goes out of bounds.

*Variation:* Assign players a different color using different colored pinnies, flags, armbands or stickers to place on shirts, since some younger children may have trouble remembering numbers.

For older children, I call this game "War" and use a smaller playing area. Make the purpose of the game about controlling the ball or defending or offensive play. In 2 vs. 2 exercises, focus on one player winning possession of the ball and then passing to the teammate.

Divide players into two groups. Have Group A stand next to one goal post, and then have Group B stand on the opposite post of the same goal. The coach throws a ball into the field where a player from each team will run after the ball in order to gain control of the ball. The first player to the ball becomes offense and the other player becomes defense. The object for the offensive player is to score on the goal where both teams are standing. The goal for the defensive player is to clear the ball or take control of the ball.

Make up your own variations of the game. You may find something that works better for your team.

## **Kick the Coach**

All the kids get a ball in a confined space and must dribble it around until they can pass it or shoot it at the coach who is moving around within the space attempting to avoid being hit by a ball. Often times you have to let some hit you. Make faces, grimaces or noises to provoke them to try harder. Every time the coach is struck by the ball he yells "Ouch",

usually louder based on the strength of the hit. The drill teaches ball control and shooting as well as making the players think a little. As a bonus sometimes fall to the ground at the end if struck a couple times well. Consider using it at the end of practice so that the kids go home with a smile.

### **Teach the Parents**

During the first practice of the season have a scrimmage between the parents and the players (with the coaches helping the players and making sure the parents don't win). Since a lot of parents have never played soccer before, the scrimmage will show the parents how difficult the game is. The hope is that a parent will think twice before yelling at a child during a game.

Have another scrimmage between parents and players at the end of the season. The kids love showing their parents what they've learned. Not to mention they really like beating their parents. Everybody seems to enjoy this scrimmage.

### **Goalkeeper Scramble**

Have players stand on the outside the penalty area to the left or right of the goal. On your command, a player will run to the line of the penalty area and lie down on her stomach. On your next command the player will jump up to take her position as goalkeeper in front of the goal. At the same time, kick a ball into the area in front of the goal. The object is for the player to get into the goalkeeper position to stop the ball from going into the goal. Vary the pace of the kick depending on the skill of the goalkeeper. Let the players know that it's okay for the goalkeeper to get dirty and sometimes the goalkeeper has to run back to stop a shot.

### **Hot Potato**

This is a good game for beginning goalkeepers. Have the players stand on the center circle or in a line. Players pass the ball to the next player using only their hands. Once they reach the last person in the circle or at the end of the line, have them pass the ball back to the starting point. Even though the ball is a "hot potato," don't let the players just bat it with their hands to the next player. Make sure they catch and then pass the ball to the next player.

If a player drops the ball, have him pick it up and pass it to the next player and then have him run around the circle to get back in line. Or have him run and touch the goal or have him step out of line and do 5 jumping jacks. It doesn't really matter what the "punishment" is for dropping the ball. The kids will love running around or jumping. Just don't make the punishment excessive.

*Variation:* Divide the team into groups and make it a relay race.

Put players into pairs and have them toss and catch the ball back and forth.

### **Alligator in the River**

Mark off a river (lane) in front of the goal with cones. Have your alligator (goalkeeper) kneel in the center of the lane right in front of the goal. Other players dribble around the

river, but tell them not to shoot at the goal unless they dribble into the river. Players must take turns entering the river with the alligator. Start with the players taking low shots forcing the goalkeeper to dive to her left or right to stop the shot. After a few turns, players may start shooting higher, but the alligator cannot leave her knees.

*Variation:* Add two or three lanes so that players have to shoot at different angles. Remind players that they may only shoot when in a shooting lane.

If you add lanes, add a second alligator. Then more than one player may enter a river, but no two players can enter the same river at the same time. Both alligators must remain on their knees.

If you're in an age group who doesn't use goalkeepers, let a defender be the alligator. Instead of kneeling and using her hands to stop shots, tell her to kick the ball away from the goal. Remember not to let her enter the river to block the shots.

### **Keep it from the Keeper**

Divide players into two groups or groups of five to seven players. Create a 20 x 20 yard playing area for each group. One player in each group is the keeper. Number the other players from 1 to 5 or 6, depending on the size of the group.

Numbered players pass to each other in sequence (1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 4, etc.) while the keeper tries to intercept the passes using either hands or feet. Don't just let the keeper kick the ball far away, encourage controlling the ball.

*Variation:* Give players a target of making two or three passes before the keeper intercepts the ball. Increase the target number of passes with each success.

Reduce the number of touches that the passing players are allowed. In other words, a player may only touch the ball 2 times before making a pass (the player must pass on the third touch).

### **Snake**

Players are grouped into threes in this follow the leader type game. First player in the group is the "head" of the snake and does not have a ball. The second player is the "body," with a ball at her feet, and must follow the head of the snake, dribbling the ball, wherever the head goes. The third player is the "rattle" and does not have a ball. This player only follows, but cannot pass the body.

Emphasize to the head to vary their lead – some fast, some slow, some turns, some stopping, etc. Let one lead for about 20 – 30 seconds. Then on the coach's whistle, everyone stops. The head moves to become the rattle and the rattle moves to become the body and the body moves to become the head. Continue until all players have had a chance to be each part of the snake.

### **Monkey in the Middle**

All players form a circle and choose someone to be the monkey in the middle of the circle. The players forming the circle pass one ball to each other while the person in the middle

tries to gain control of the ball. When the player in the middle gets the ball, the person on the circle who last touched the ball becomes the monkey.

*Variation:* Put a goalkeeper in the middle of the circle. The monkey may then use her hands or feet to gain control of the ball.

### **Passing 1, 2, 3**

Divide players into groups of three and assign each player a number from 1 to 3. The players must pass the ball in sequential order (1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 1, etc.) as they run down the field together. After a few minutes, have them pass in reverse order.

*Variation:* Limit the number of touches a player may take before passing to the next player.

### **Give and Go**

This one is good for older players to get them to move after they make a pass. It is appropriate for kids who are a little older, who pass the ball but like to stop and really admire their better passes. Everyone spaces themselves around the center circle. Give the ball to one person, and they call out someone's name and pass to them. They then run to the receiver's position in the circle. The receiver upon hearing their name called, steps forward to receive the pass and yells "I got it!" The sequence is then repeated. Several things are accomplished besides getting them used to movement. The "I got it!" yell addresses the problem of nobody playing the ball in a game because they thought the other was going to play it. It also helps to learn teammates' names quickly.

*Variation:* Invariably, someone is always left out so start a countdown from 10 to 0 and they have to figure out who has been left out (the left out person should be quiet). They start yelling among themselves to figure out who it is which helps foster communication on the field, and it can be amusing to watch too.

After a few practices, they get it down so they look pretty sharp. Then try tossing in a second ball. Now they have to think more because people are moving and two are busy with the other ball.

### **Obstacle Course**

Set up cones around the field for players to dribble around or make lanes for players to run through or dribble at speed through. Let older kids throw in the ball and then run to the goal to take a shot. Have them throw the ball in to the coach and then receive a pass back from the coach, dribble to the goal and take a shot on goal. Have them jump over cones and then receive passes from the coach. Then they must dribble through the cones and take a shot on goal. Make the obstacles more difficult for older or more skilled players. Be creative!

### **Follow the Leader**

Have players work in pairs and each player has a ball. One player in the pair is the leader and dribbles around the playing area while the partner follows copying what the leader is doing. Encourage the dribble with different parts of the foot, dribble with the left foot,

stopping the ball with the sole of the foot and then changing direction, etc. Be sure to change the leader every minute or so.

*Variation:* Coach is the leader and the whole team must follow the coach. If you coach young children, make it simple by having them do what you do without a ball. You can hop on one foot, take giant steps, walk backwards, etc.

### **Keep Away in a Box**

This is a game to help teach shielding the ball. Mark off a small playing area about 10 x 10 yards or use the penalty area. Group the players into pairs of equal skill level. Give each pair a ball. To begin the game, each player has one foot on the ball.

On the coach's command, each player tries to take possession of the ball. The player who first wins possession tries to keep it away from her partner. The ball cannot leave the playing area. If it does, that pair is out of the game. The winners are the pair who can keep the ball in the playing area the longest.

Switch partners every couple of rounds. As the game progresses, mix the skill level in the pairs.

*Variation:* Give a player 1 point if she can keep possession for five seconds. Tally the number of points per player at the end of the game.

Put cones in the area with a ball placed on each cone. Assign each player a cone. Have one player try to knock balls off the cones.

### **Challenge Drill**

This game helps to develop dribbling skill with speed and work on the defender getting back in front of the ball on a breakaway. Divide team into two groups. Set up Group A about 20 – 30 yards in front of the goal. Start Group B about five yards behind Group A. The coach stands even with the first player in Group A and passes the ball towards the goal. Player A must collect the ball, sprint toward the goal and shoot before Player B catches him. The players then return to the opposite group (Player A goes to Group B and Player B goes to Group A). If one player is dominating on defense, let him serve the ball to Group A.

This game can be played with or without a goalkeeper.

### **Snowball**

Use one half of the field to create the playing area. Mark off large goals on each end with cones. Divide players into two teams. There are no goalkeepers. With the larger goals, relatively short playing area and absence of goalkeepers means it's possible to score from almost anywhere.

Start by playing 1v1 (player from each team), and tell them to shoot as soon as they have an opportunity. Each time one team scores, the other team adds a player to the field – the idea being swing the advantage back to the other team.

Players should be ready to sprint on as soon as a goal is scored and have extra balls ready to throw in anytime the ball goes out of play. (Have an assistant gathering balls kicked out of the area.) The game is won by the team who scores against an opponent that has ALL its players on the field.

*Variation:* Make it a rule that once a player has scored a goal, he can't score again until another player on his team has scored.

Divide players into three teams. The resting team gathers stray balls. The winning team can choose to stay on and play the resting team.

### **Slow Soccer**

Divide players into teams of four or five. Set up a playing area of 30 x 20. This is just a small sided game, but running is NOT allowed. Speed walking is allowed, but if a player breaks into a run – even for a few seconds – the other team gets a free kick. After 5 or 10 minutes, lift the no running restriction and play normally.

### **The Blind Leading the Blind**

Group players into pairs and give one ball to each pair. Place three gates in front of each team about five yards apart. Each gate is two cones on the ground about three feet apart. One player has a ball at his feet. This player must keep his eyes closed as he dribbles and passes the ball through each gate. No peeking! Use blindfold, if you have them, or cover eyes with a t-shirt.

The player's partner works as a guide, talking the blindfolded player through the gates by voice. The guide cannot touch the ball or the partner. When the pair makes it through all three gates, they quickly change places and make their way back through the gates.

### **Just plain GAMES!**

For warm-ups, play games which are not soccer related. Games such as Simon Says, Freeze Tag, Red Light Green Light, etc., promote physical activity and are fun for the kids. Vary the games by adding a soccer ball to the mix. Have fun and be creative!

### **More Games & Drills**

There are endless types of games a coach can use to teach basic skills during practice. Use the ones listed here, modify them or make up your own games. For more game ideas, drills for older players and other coaching resources, checkout the Links & Resources tab on the NYSA Website ([www.nysa-soccer.org](http://www.nysa-soccer.org)).

## Additional Resources

There are many exceptional resources available on the Internet and in your local library for coaches and parents. Take a look at the links below for more information about coaching theories and ideas.

For ideas about “Honoring the Game” using a simple code of Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self (ROOTS for short) or the “Elm Tree of Mastery” which focuses on effort, learning and mistakes, please visit the website [www.responsiblesports.com](http://www.responsiblesports.com).

You may also find additional games, coaching articles and coach forums on the website [www.footy4kids.co.uk](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk).

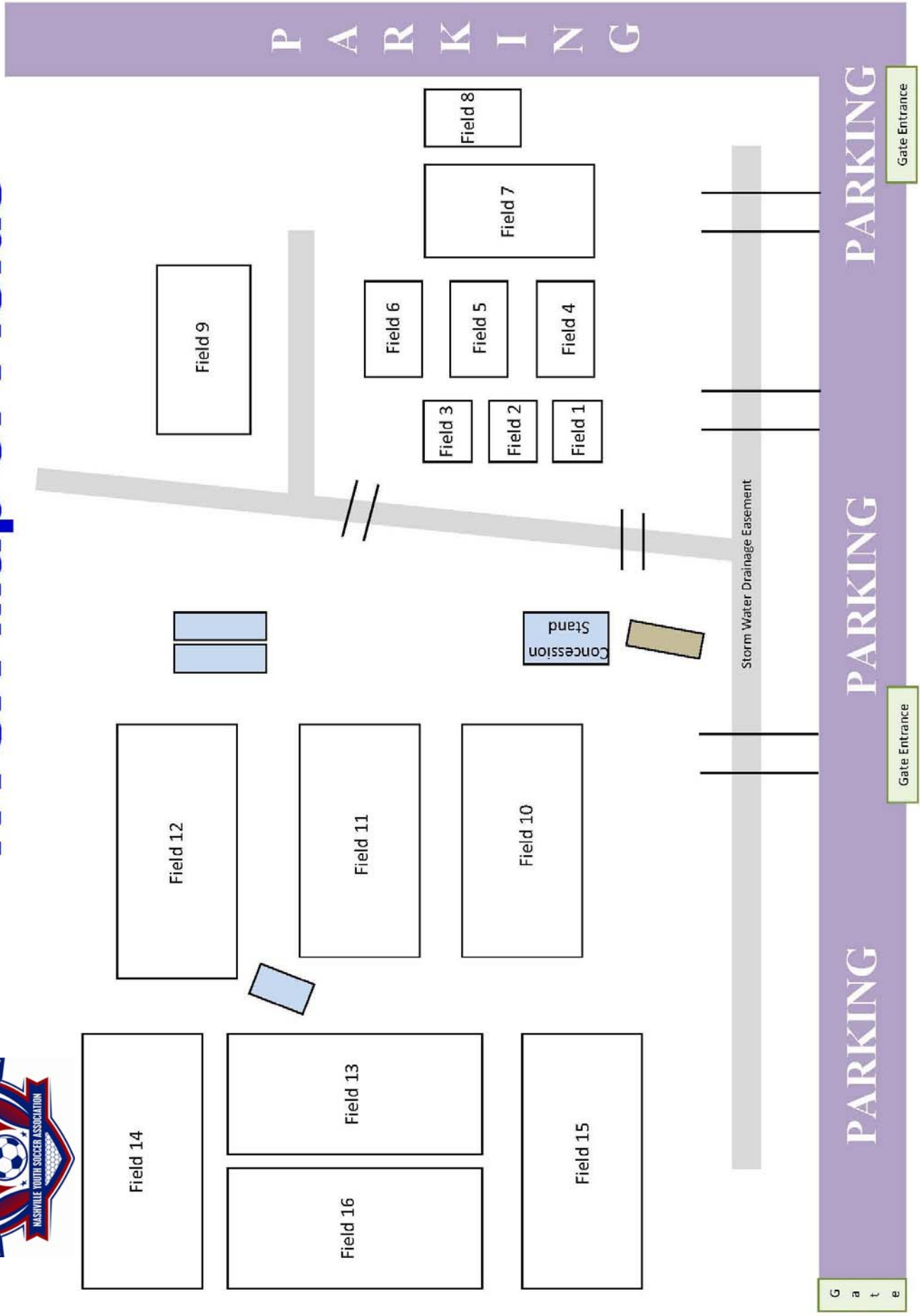
Coaching articles covering coach/player development, fitness & nutrition and youth movement can be found on the Tennessee State Soccer Association website at [www.tnsoccer.org](http://www.tnsoccer.org).

Check out the Links and Resources tab on the NYSA website for more websites and other resources.

And please don't overlook one the most tremendous resources you have as a coach at NYSA ... the experience of other coaches and the NYSA Board of Directors. If you have questions, ask. If you can't find answers on your own, we are here to help.



# NYSA Map of Fields



G a t e

Gate Entrance

Gate Entrance



## COACH ROLLOVER FORM

Coach Name \_\_\_\_\_

Current Age Group \_\_\_\_\_ Moving to Age Group \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I have decided to coach again. Please roll over my current registration fee to next season.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have decided not to coach again. I am requesting a refund of the current registration fee paid.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have decided not to coach again. I am requesting that the current registration fee paid be rolled to cover registration fee for my child for next season.

By signing below, I agree that I have fulfilled all the coach's duties as outlined during the Coaches Meeting and in the Coaches Handbook.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Do not write below this line. For use by NYSA personnel only.

NYSA Approval \_\_\_\_\_

Reason Not Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Refund check mailed \_\_\_\_\_