

# *Season Planner*

## **Good Preparation-Getting it Right**

Coaches should be aware of the importance of having good relations with parents and one way of doing this is to hold a parent meeting preferably before the season begins. If a meeting is impossible, the following information could be put into a letter to parents/players, but a face-to-face meeting is preferable. Having players present is optional but it would be advisable to have a similar meeting with them.

### *Purposes of a parent meeting include the following:*

- Enables parents to understand the objectives and goals of the club
- Enables parents to become acquainted with you, the coaches/managers
- Informs parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport
- Informs parents of your expectations of them and of their child
- Enables you to listen and address any concerns the parents might have
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players
- Allows you to seek and obtain parental support and any assistance required (transport, supervision, consent forms etc.)
- Enables you to get contact information and any relevant medical information
- Gives you an opportunity to introduce to parents the policies and procedures of the club

### *Things to consider when organizing a parent meeting:*

- Hold it early in the season; preferably before the start of the season.
- Having the players present is optional but there is no reason why they could not be present.
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
  1. training times, location
  2. club rules
  3. team goals/rules-codes of conduct
  4. summary or outline of the meeting
  5. Player Information Sheet

### *Important points you may cover in your meeting:*

#### **Coach introduction**

1. introduce yourself and assistant coaches/volunteers (or ask for volunteers if needed at this time)
2. give some background information about yourself (why you are coaching, your experience, your coaching qualifications and how long associated with the club)

## Coaching philosophy/Club Ethos

1. discuss what you consider to be the positive values of soccer
2. give an outline of your methods for coaching/teaching skills (describe a typical coaching session)
3. state the importance you assign to having fun and developing skills
4. state the importance you assign to winning and losing-define success
5. discuss any team rules and guidelines (seek player input), disciplinary procedures/complaints procedures
6. give details and contact numbers for the Clubs Children's Officer/Officers
7. emphasise all club safety rules and policies

## Details of the season

1. training timetable (how many per week?, how long?)
2. game schedule (how many?, when do they begin?)
3. criteria for team selection, minimum playing time (what is the rule in your club/league?) - In line with FAI Guide/Rules.
4. equipment required (e.g. shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards, water bottle)
5. risks (soccer is a contact sport, although a relatively safe one)
6. club insurance and what it covers

## Team management (Points to consider)

1. ask for volunteers (drivers, supervision, decide beforehand what your needs are)
2. complete contact forms with emergency telephone numbers/or car sharing system/appropriate medical information

## Discuss COACH'S responsibilities, for example:

- to demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship
- to act as a positive role model at all times
- to treat each player fairly with dignity and respect
- to have organized training sessions focusing on the soccer fundamentals and the development of skills in an age appropriate manner
- to ensure a safe environment (e.g. arrive at training on time and remain after until every child is picked up by an authorised adult, ensure that any equipment conforms to any club/FAI guidelines, check training area )
- to contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem
- to help each player set realistic and attainable individual and team goals
- to give parents a timetable of training and games and establish a system for informing parents of games/training sessions.
- to allow each player to participate, establish a minimum playing time (check club/league rules)

- to respect all players opponents and referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself in a controlled and responsible manner

***Discuss PLAYER'S responsibilities, for example:***

- to attend training/games regularly, and to arrive on time
- to bring proper equipment to each training session and game
- to inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a training session/game
- to make each training session a challenge to improve and develop skills
- to work toward good behaviour, sportsmanship and teamwork, remember standards of behaviour are equally important as performance
- to respect the referees and opponents
- to be supportive of all team-mates all of the time especially when things are not going well for them
- to ensure that they do not keep quiet if anyone is causing them harm or distress, children need permission to tell

***Discuss PARENTS' responsibilities, for example:***

- to transport your child to and from training sessions/games on time
- to be positive and supportive of all the players (criticism does not improve performance)
- to help their child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- to focus on developing skills and having fun, not necessarily on winning
- to avoid material rewards for your child (the reward is the fun of playing and being part of the team)
- to attend games and support the team when possible
- to refrain from criticising opponents; be positive with all the players
- to respect referees (they will make mistakes, but they are doing their best)
- to refrain from coaching your child during games-too many instructions can confuse children
- to help put up goals/nets and help wash kit

***Finally invite and answer questions***

### *Parent/Guardian Meeting- Points to Remember*

Have a parent meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to the upcoming season.

Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.

Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.

Be clear on what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. It's impossible to please everyone!

Know your club policies and procedures, mission statement and club rules, Football Association of Ireland codes of behaviour. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents and be very clear on what you expect from them.

Handle any confrontation one-on-one (avoid having an audience) Try not to be defensive and listen in a calm manner to what they have to say. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Thank them for their input.

Resist unfair pressure. It is your responsibility as coach to make the final decision. This doesn't mean that you can't still listen to parents.

Don't discuss individual players with other parents or players. This is totally inappropriate. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.

Insist on parents being positive at all times. Parents should not to criticise any children during training or a game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.

Don't blame the players for their parents' actions.

Be consistent! Changing a rule or philosophy during the season can cause problems with players and parents. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change and the reason for such change as soon as possible.

Most importantly, be fair! If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect, and that of their parents as well.

**Remember, you are not entitled to respect, you earn it!**