



**PITTSBURGH DYNAMO SOCCER
RECREATION LEAGUE HANDBOOK**

www.pittsburghdynamo.org

Revised August 2013

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What is Dynamo?

The Pittsburgh Dynamo Youth Soccer Association is a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose purpose is to “organize, conduct, and administer programs of education and instruction for children in the sport of amateur soccer.”

Dynamo Soccer, founded in 1982 with about 35 players, now provides a recreational soccer experience for over 1200 players who range in age from 4 to 16 years of age. It is among the largest youth soccer clubs in Western Pennsylvania.

The league is divided into three major divisions. The Recreational League plays during the Fall and Spring. The Indoor League fills the intervening winter months with an indoor instructional experience that is open to all age groups. The Travel League offers competitive play for children 10 and older during Fall and Spring. Further details and current information regarding Dynamo’s organizational structure and the operation of its leagues can be found at Dynamo’s website, www.pittsburghdynamo.org.

League Philosophy and Expectations

The Dynamo Soccer Club's Bylaws state:

The emphasis of the Corporation's programs shall, at all times, be on the development of fundamental soccer skills, knowledge of the rules of soccer and good sportsmanship. Success in competition is not a purpose of the Corporation except to the extent that such success follows as a by-product of the above emphasis.

Dynamo takes the emphasis on instruction and good sportsmanship seriously, and has a number of specific approaches to implement these principles. Some of the most important are listed below:

1) Team Parity

Teams in each age group are organized to be as equal in ability as possible. Age-Level Commissioners make this determination based upon player ratings provided by the parents during registration time. If the information is not available, the Age-Level Commissioner will assign children solely on the basis of practice and game day preferences, as expressed on the registration form.

2) Playing Time and Field Positions

Coaches are instructed to give all children equal playing time. Coaches are instructed to give all children equal exposure to all field positions, while

recognizing that field positions are not formally assigned until players reach U10 age-level play. Exposure to all field positions is emphasized to foster development of a full range of skills, to emphasize the idea that all positions contribute to a team, and to avoid any tendency to dominate another team by selective placement of the most able players.

3) Match Conduct

All players, coaches, and parents must obey the rules and recognize the authority of the referees. Offending players will receive yellow cards (warnings) or red cards (expulsions) according to the seriousness of the infraction. Fortunately, this is a very rare occurrence.

Spectators – including parents – may not call any child by name (although generic team cheers such as "Go, Blue!" are encouraged). Coaches and spectators are also forbidden from providing any instructions to players during the course of a game. Again, positive comments, such as "Good kick, Blue!", are encouraged.

Field Monitors are present at matches to help enforce these rules, and in the event of persistent violation, referees are empowered to stop matches until a correction is made.

These rules are designed to minimize excessive involvement of parental egos in what should, after all, be a child-oriented activity. We view these rules as essential to maintaining the positive atmosphere that is fundamental to the league philosophy.

In line with these expectations, Dynamo will require that parents sign a "Parent Sideline Conduct Agreement" prior to their child participating with any Pittsburgh Dynamo Recreation Team. Please see Dynamo's Parent Sideline Conduct Agreement, Handbook Appendix A.

4) Parental Effort

There are no paid contributors for any league function. All parents are required to assist league operations by carrying out a job during the course of the season. These are small commitments of time individually but, collectively, form the fiber that allows the league to function.

Parents can select from a variety of tasks and registration of a child for play is dependent upon making such a selection. Jobs typically require only a few hours of time during the season. There are job quotas based on need, and the two most common jobs are field set up crew and team parent. Field set up volunteers assist with setting up the boundaries of each field and the goals

used on each field. Field set up volunteers also assist in moving cones, goals and other equipment off the field and returning it to Dynamo equipment boxes. The Recreational League has a tradition of parent volunteers providing drinks and snacks after each match. Team Parents organize this activity such that each family on a team will provide refreshments once during the season.

Other jobs, typically requiring more effort, offer opportunities to shape the club's development. Coaches and referees fall within this group.

Recreational League Age Levels

The annual age breakdowns for each age level can be found either on the league web site (www.pittsburghdynamo.org) or on the web site of PA West, Dynamo's parent organization. In general, a child turns the age listed in a given age-level during the course of the Fall and Spring seasons. For example, a child in U7 during the 2008-2009 seasons would turn seven between Aug 1, 2008 and July 31, 2009.

The specific game plan for each age level is attached to this handbook as Appendix B. A summary of micro-soccer rules is attached to this handbook as Appendix C.

U5, U6, and U7

Play through the U7 age bracket is co-ed. Children in these groups are introduced to the game through Micro Soccer. Micro Soccer is played without goalkeepers on small fields and is designed to ensure more touches on the ball and involve all children in the game.

Each U6 and U7 team simultaneously plays dual games on adjacent fields each weekend. Referees play an essential role in instructing children in the rules of the game during weekend games. Coaches are responsible for substituting children into these games in a fashion that ensures equal playing time and balanced play. Coaches teach basic skills during a weekly practice using positive reinforcement.

U8 Through U12

Play at this level is segregated by gender. U8/9 players play Micro Soccer (two side-by-side games without goalkeepers), while U10/12 players play "small sided games," with 5v5 field players plus a goalkeeper. For U10/12, each team plays a single game each weekend on a medium sized field and, as in Micro Soccer, coaches ensure equal playing time for each child and substitute to ensure balanced play. Coaching at practice in this age bracket focuses on fun, skill development, teamwork, and tactics.

U13 Through U16

Based on current levels of registration, U13/16 players will play on co-ed teams. U13/16 players play with 7v7 field players plus a goalkeeper or whatever team attendance at a particular game will support. For U13/16, each team plays a single game each weekend on a full sized field. Coaches ensure equal playing time for each child and substitute to ensure balanced play. Coaching at practice in this age bracket focuses on fun, skill development, teamwork, and tactics.

Leadership Positions

Since Dynamo is a non-profit, volunteer organization, it is fully dependent upon the willingness of parents to step forward and assume leadership roles in the administration and operation of the league. The following is a listing of these positions, along with a description of the responsibilities that they entail.

League Commissioners

The League Commissioner oversees all aspects of recreational play and is entrusted with maintaining the health and vitality of the league. The Commissioner is appointed by the League President and Board of Directors, who oversee operation of the league and set policy implemented by the Commissioner.

The specific responsibilities of the Commissioner are to:

1. Communicate the guiding principles of the “Dynamo philosophy” to volunteers, parents, and children participating in league play.
2. Prepare a budget for each season and obtain approval for proposed expenditures from the Board of Directors.
3. Recruit volunteers for other leadership positions.
4. Oversee those serving in a leadership capacity.
5. Determine the schedule of play during the Fall and Spring seasons.
6. Ensure that all volunteer activities essential for league play are administered appropriately and in a timely manner consistent with the schedule for play.
7. Resolve disputes regarding interpretation and implementation of league policies.

Age-Level Commissioners

The age-level commissioners are restricted to the administration of team play in their age groups. There is a commissioner for each of the major age levels and they serve under the direction of the Recreational League Commissioner.

The specific duties of those serving in this position are to:

1. Assemble balanced teams using player rating information, practice day preference, and limitations of play (e.g., Saturday- or Sunday-only games), provided by the League Commissioner.
2. Address concerns and requests of parents regarding team assignment in a manner consistent with league regulations.
3. Serve as the primary conduit for dissemination of information to Coaches relevant to player assignment, coaching clinics, and scheduling of league activities.
4. Inform the League Commissioner of all changes in player team assignment.

Coaches

Part of Dynamo's mission is to provide a soccer experience that is appropriate for each child's age, skill, and level of enthusiasm. Dynamo and its volunteer coaches must work together to ensure that every player has a positive experience when participating in Dynamo soccer.

Coaches are entrusted with the most important function of the league – teaching the game to our children in a positive fashion consistent with league philosophy. Coaches are role models. They play a leading role in helping our children learn good sportsmanship and self-discipline.

Dynamo believes that coaches have a responsibility to inspire our children through the fundamental principles of teamwork and fair play, while focusing on the fun of soccer. Dynamo believes that coaches are, first and foremost, teachers who have a duty to assure that their actions and words promote important life skills and the development of good character in our children. Please see Dynamo's Coaches' Code of Conduct, Handbook Appendix D.

Prior experience playing the game is not a prerequisite for coaching, but we encourage all coaches to take instructional courses. These courses are arranged on a yearly basis and the league will refund registration fees for those who take a course and then coach a recreational league team. One can serve as either a head or assistant coach and your children are always assigned to your team unless you specify otherwise.

Specific responsibilities of coaches are to:

1. Teach the fundamental rules and skills of the game to children at weekly practices and do so in a positive fashion consistent with league regulations.
2. Serve as the principal conduit for communicating relevant information to

- parents of children on their team.
3. Defer to the Age-Level Commissioner regarding team assignments. Under no circumstance should a coach sanction the transfer of a child to another team, nor should a child who is not on the official roster be permitted to practice or play with the team. Siblings of team members also are not permitted to practice with the team even if they are registered Dynamo players assigned to a different team.

Referees

Referees are responsible for overseeing weekend games. We encourage both adults and teens to participate in this important activity. While prior experience playing the game is not a prerequisite, knowledge of the rules is required. Training courses are sponsored by PA West, Dynamo's parent organization, provide yearly opportunities for training and certification at a variety of levels. Specific responsibilities for referees include:

1. Ensuring that league rules are followed in weekend games.
2. Instructing players on the proper application and execution of rules and skills. This is particularly important in the recreational league age levels using Micro Soccer. In Micro Soccer, referees are endowed with an instructional role during the game.
3. Ensuring that coaches and parents adhere to the "Dynamo philosophy" during the course of a game.

Field Monitors

Field Monitors are present at matches to help enforce Dynamo's philosophy and expectations regarding match play. They also ensure that Dynamo players, volunteers, and spectators observe Schenley Oval rules banning dogs, food, and liquids other than water from the Schenley Oval turf.

Field Lining and Set Up

Field Lining and Set Up volunteers are responsible for making sure that there is a visible playing field during the season. Field lining is typically done a few days before the start of the season and occasionally during the season especially after a heavy rain.

Volunteers are not needed for field lining for any game played on Schenley Oval turf. Field lining also is unnecessary in the event that Dynamo engages a professional service to maintain lines for grass games.

League Equipment Manager

The League Equipment Manager will be responsible for all Dynamo recreational league equipment stored at the Schenley Oval as well as the equipment distributed to each Dynamo recreational league coach. The League Equipment Manager will work with the Recreational League Commissioner to purchase equipment, to distribute equipment at the start of each season, to collect equipment at the end of each season, and to re-use any equipment in good condition in a subsequent season.

Team Parents

Based on the preferences of the team coach, team parents assist with communicating information such as the team practice and game schedules to players' families and organizing game day volunteers for providing snacks and setting up fields and equipment on game days.

General Coaching Information

Pre-Season Responsibilities

1. Meet your age-level commissioner.
2. Contact your assistant coach and team parent. Plan how to share the labor and keep him/her involved.
3. Acquire your team roster, schedule, shirts, and equipment.
4. Within the first two days after receiving your roster, contact the parent of each child and pass on the following information, all noted in the coach letter:
 - A. **Where and when** (day and time) the first practice will take place.
 - B. **What each child should bring to practice.**
 - **Ball**, of correct size for age group, marked with child's name
 U5-7: Size 3
 U8-12: Size 4
 U13-16: Size 5
 - **Shin guards**, absolutely required for all practices and matches
 - **Soccer socks**
 - **Appropriate clothing**, shorts/sweatpants according to season
 - **Water bottle**, for both practice and games
 - C. **What each child will receive at the first practice.**
 - **Team shirt**, to be worn at all subsequent practices and games
 - **Team roster**, to help acquaint players and their families with one another
 - **Game Schedule**

Responsibilities at the first practice

1. Hold team meeting with parents and explain the Dynamo philosophy and rules.
2. Distribute rosters and game schedules by giving copies directly to players' parents.
3. Distribute the team shirts according to player size.

Planning for each team practice

- A. **Timing:** 5 minute warm-up, 3 mini-drills/games (curriculum), 15-20 minute scrimmage. Please refer to the Pittsburgh Dynamo website for practice lesson plan resources. <http://www.pghdynamo.org/home.php?layout=1261>
 A password is required to access the PDF files. Passwords can be obtained from your Age-Level Commissioner.
- B. **Focus:** Only one skill per session (e.g, passing).
- C. **Progression:** Make drills/games successively more challenging (raise

expectations/goals throughout the season).

D. Organization: Develop stations that players can rotate through.

E. Style: Above all, **KEEP IT FUN** (and have fun yourself)!

Game Day

Please refer to Appendices B and C of this Handbook for information on field dimensions, the number of field players, length of play, etc.

BEFORE MATCHES

Referees, linesmen, coaches, and teams should arrive 15 minutes before the start of play.

All players must present themselves to the referee for inspection. Shin-guards covered by socks must be worn. Jewelry, watches, hard hair ornaments, etc. are not allowed.

The referee will designate a team to kick off first.

If insufficient players are present, a match may still be played. Players must be transferred to equalize team numbers and reduced sides may be used by coaches' joint consent.

DURING MATCHES

Shoes should be tied at all times; referee will stop the game if necessary.

Spectators are to remain on the field boundary that is opposite from the coaches and players.

Neither spectators nor coaching staff may shout any instructions.

Players, coaches, and spectators shall refrain from criticizing referees and linesmen.

The object is to maximize playing time and minimize downtime. The referee has final authority and agreements between coaches are not to supersede referee decisions.

Each player should play at least 50% of every match. For U10-16 games, players are to be rotated among field positions.

All matches, except last of day, must end five (5) minutes before the hour, even if match is not complete.

All players and coaches are to shake hands after each match. Good sportsmanship rules!

Important Safety Information

- Thunder or lightning immediately terminates any practice or game.
- The ability to cancel matches prior to the onset of scheduled play rests solely with the League Commissioner. Coaches should not cancel matches unless notified to do so. This policy is overridden by the appearance of thunder and/or lightning.
- Referees can decide to stop play at any point in a match.
- The decision to cancel a practice rests with the team coach. The decision should be made as late in the day as possible, but in sufficient time to notify parents.

APPENDIX A
Parent Sideline Conduct Agreement

Parents play an important role in helping their own children and other players learn good sportsmanship and self discipline. The Pittsburgh Dynamo Youth Soccer Association's mission is to collaborate with families for a fun and child-centered soccer experience for youth in Pittsburgh's East End.

1. I understand the fun of soccer is playing, not winning.

Parents should encourage children in skill development, teamwork, self-esteem and good sportsmanship. Putting competitive pressure on children to score and win is not a part of the Dynamo culture and philosophy.

2. I will support the team, not just my own child.

Soccer is a player-dominated game, and children are learning how to make decisions on the field. You'll enjoy the game more by understanding soccer skills and tactics, the flow of play, and how the game is played. Show good sportsmanship by remaining positive. Applaud good play by either team. Give encouragement to the entire team.

3. I will let the players play.

Soccer is a players' game. Emphasize player development and having fun over winning. Also, please keep in mind that the Pittsburgh Dynamo recreation philosophy is not to keep score or maintain a win/loss record. General positive cheers like "Go Blue" should be the norm. NO coaching or calling out individual players' names by coaches or spectators is permitted. *Parents who have the urge to shout out instructions to players, coaches, or referees should control themselves or find another league.*

4. I will let the coaches coach.

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

5. I will let the referees judge the game.

Support the referees. They are learning a new skill also. They are responsible for controlling the game and enforcing fair play and sportsmanship. They are working with the coach to teach the rules and spirit of the game, improve soccer skills, and encourage teamwork.

6. I will be a supportive soccer parent.

Be on time. Make sure your child has his/her equipment. Make sure the end-of-the-game rituals (like handshakes) reflect good sportsmanship. Make sure that you and your child attend as many practices and games as possible and notify your coach if you cannot attend. Volunteer to help. Pittsburgh Dynamo is an all-volunteer league. Everybody helps. A listing of volunteer positions can be found on the Pittsburgh Dynamo website.

7. I understand that they are only kids and this is only a game.

Allow your child to be a child. Kids see soccer as fun, learning new skills, being on a team, gaining success by touching the ball, and just being involved. You'll see great progress if fun and skill development are your priorities.

8. I will remain by the field during practices and games.

To ensure the safety of your own child and to allow the coach to focus on coaching the whole team, please REMAIN AT YOUR TEAM'S FIELD SIDELINE as much as possible. If you do have to leave briefly, designate another parent to be responsible for your child. During games, Spectators are to remain on the field boundary that is opposite from the coaches and players.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to this Parent Sideline Conduct Agreement.

Dated: _____

Player's Name (Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Print Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Print Name

APPENDIX B
Age-Level Games Plan

Age Level	Game Format	Dual, side-by-side games	Ball Size	Roster (estimated)	Keeper (GK)	Assigned Field Time	Field Size	Refs	Goal Size
U5	3v3	No	3	6	No	45 min.	60'x90'	Parent	PopUp
U6	3v3	Yes	3	9	No	60 min.	60'x90'	Yes	PopUp
U7	3v3 (preferred) or 4v4	Yes	3	9	No	60 min.	90'x120'	Yes	PopUp
U8/9	4v4	Yes	4	10	No	60 min.	90'x120'	Yes	4'x6'
U10/12	5v5, plus GK	No	4	9	Yes	75 min.	half turf	Yes	6'x12'
U13/16	7v7,* plus GK	No	5	12	Yes	90 min.	full turf	Yes	8'x24'

*** U13/16 may play 7v7, plus goalkeeper, or whatever attendance supports.**

APPENDIX C

PITTSBURGH DYNAMO RECREATION LEAGUE MICRO-SOCCER RULE SUMMARY

	MICRO-SOCCER					
	U5	U6	U7	U8/9	U10/12	U13/16
Goalie	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Kick Off*	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Throw In*	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Corner Kick	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Goal Kick*	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Fouls	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Direct Kick	NO; Indirect only*	NO; Indirect except for corner kick*	NO; Indirect except for corner kick*	NO; Indirect except for corner kick*	YES	YES
Penalty Kick	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Offside	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Slide Tackle	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Playing period**	4-5 minutes Plan to play as many periods as assigned field time permits.	6 minutes Plan to play as many periods as assigned field time permits.	7 minutes Plan to play as many periods as assigned field time permits.	4 - 12:00 quarters	2 - 30:00 halves	2 - 40:00 halves
Assigned Field Time***	45 minutes	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	75 minutes	1.5 hours

Kick off - taken to start game, to start second half, or after a goal is scored

Throw In - taken after ball crosses touch line

Corner Kick - taken after ball crosses goal line (no goal scored), last touched by defender

Goal kick - taken after ball crosses goal line (no goal scored), last touched by attacker

*A goal cannot be scored directly from an indirect kick, kick off, throw in, or goal kick; the ball must be touched by another player prior to scoring. A goal can be scored directly from a corner kick.

**Playing periods can be shortened on particularly hot days, when there are not enough players to make substitutions, or if, in the opinion of the referee, the players look spent.

***Games end on the hour. Teams are asked to leave the field as quickly as possible so that subsequent games can begin on schedule and maximize assigned field time.

APPENDIX D

Coaches' Code of Conduct

Part of Pittsburgh Dynamo's mission is to provide a soccer experience that is appropriate for each child's age, skill, and level of enthusiasm. Dynamo and its volunteer coaches must work together to ensure that every player has a positive experience when participating in Dynamo soccer. Dynamo believes that coaches have a responsibility to inspire our children through the fundamental principles of teamwork and fair play, while focusing on the fun of soccer. In line with this purpose statement, Pittsburgh Dynamo requires all coaches and assistant coaches to sign this Code of Conduct prior to their participation as recreational coaches with Dynamo. The Coaches' Code of Conduct shall state the following:

1. I understand the importance of providing a positive experience and environment for the players.

As a coach, I understand that Pittsburgh Dynamo has given me the privilege and primary responsibility for developing players. I will strive to ensure that the players have a positive soccer experience. I will teach my players basic skills, techniques, and strategies, and I will give all my players the opportunity to improve their skills, gain confidence, and develop self-esteem at practice and in games. I will arrive on time to practices and games.

I have a responsibility and duty to let players "play the game" and for this, I set the tone. I will limit my coaching during games and let the referees teach the game. General positive cheers such as "Go Blue" are encouraged. I will stress that spectators not shout out to players or referees but instead can offer positive encouragement for all players after good plays.

2. I understand that soccer is more than the scoreboard.

I understand that scoring goals is not nearly as important as the safety and skill development of all of my players. I recognize that part of the Pittsburgh Dynamo recreational league philosophy is not to keep score or maintain a record of wins or losses.

3. I understand my role as a coach when it comes to opposing teams.

I understand that I represent Pittsburgh Dynamo and the community at large. I will demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times. At the end of each game, my players and I will give our opponents a handshake and say "good game."

4. I understand the importance of allowing referees to officiate the game.

I will work side by side with the referees to instill in my players and the sideline spectators a respect for the game. I will support the referees at all times during the game as they teach the rules and spirit of the game to the players.

5. I will abide by the Pittsburgh Dynamo philosophy and rules of the game.

I understand that I am responsible for understanding and competing within the letter and the spirit of the rules of the game. I will teach my players to do so as well. I will never, knowingly or intentionally, violate any provision of rules and guidelines established by Pittsburgh Dynamo.

6. Discipline

If I fail to comply with this Dynamo Coaches' Code of Conduct Agreement, or any other rules or regulations enacted by Dynamo, I agree and understand that I am subject to the feedback and requests of the Dynamo Recreation League Commissioner.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to this Coaches' Code of Conduct.

Coach Signature: _____

Date: _____

Coach Name (Printed) _____