



Dynamo Soccer Recreation League Handbook

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What is Dynamo

The Pittsburgh Dynamo Youth Soccer Association is a 501 (c) (3) Non Profit 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 5 to 19 years of age. It is among the largest Youth Soccer Clubs in Western Pennsylvania.

The league is divided into three major divisions and also sponsors an annual Summer Camp. The Recreation 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. Soccer Start and TOPSoccer offer instruction and play for disadvantaged children. The Travel League offers competitive play for children 10 and older during Fall and Spring. Further details and current information regarding league operation can be found at: pittsburghdynamo.org.

League Philosophy and Expectations

An Important Section of the Dynamo Soccer Club's Constitution States:

"Said Corporation is organized to organize, conduct and administer programs of education and instruction for children in the sport of amateur soccer. 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."

We take the emphasis on instruction and good sportsmanship seriously, and we have a number of specific approaches to implement these principles. Some of the most important are listed below:

Team Parity

Teams in each age group are organized to be as equal in ability as possible. Age Group Commissioners make this determination based upon player ratings provided by coaches at the end of each season. At the entry level, and for new players, ratings

information is generally not available. In those instances the Age Group Commissioner will assign children solely on the basis of practice day preferences expressed on the registration form. Thus, it is sometimes necessary to make mid-season correctional assignments to ensure equal distribution of skill levels among teams. This is done specifically to make the matches as even as possible and to avoid the "team-stacking" that is sometimes seen in other youth sports. This is done as early in the season as possible and in consultation with both the affected coaches and parents.

Playing Time and Positions

Coaches are instructed to give all children equal playing time. In addition, coaches are instructed, especially in the younger age groups, to give all children equal exposure to all playing positions. This is done 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 by selective placement of the most able players.

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.

Parental Effort

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. There are no paid contributors for any league 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 assisting with field preparation (field lining or goal set-up). Other jobs, typically requiring more effort offer opportunities to shape the club's development. Coaches and referees fall within this group.

The Recreation League has a tradition of 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.

Dynamo's Basic Structure

Board of Directors

See the Dynamo website for a current list of members.

Recreation League

General information regarding the organization of the Recreation League, along with comparative statistics for the Indoor and Travel Leagues, are provided below. The annual age breakdowns for each age group can be found either on the league web site (pittsburghdynamo.org) or on the web site of PA West, our parent organization.

In general, a child turns the age listed in the name during the season. For example, a child in U7 during the 2008-2009 season would turn seven between Aug 1, 2008 and July 31, 2009.

Age Groups

U6, U7, and U8

Play through the 8U age bracket is co-ed. Children in these groups are introduced to the game through MicroSoccer. MicroSoccer is played without goalkeepers on small fields and is designed to ensure more touches on the ball and involve all children in the game. Coaches teach basic skills during a weekly practice using positive reinforcement. Two games are played simultaneously on adjacent fields each weekend. Coaches are responsible for substituting children into these games in a fashion that ensures equal playing time and balanced play. Referees play an essential role in instructing children in the rules of the game during weekend games.

U10 Through U12

These players play "small sided" games with 7 or 8 field players and a goalkeeper. A single game is played each weekend on a medium sized field and, as in Microsoccer,

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. Play at this level is usually segregated by gender. However, based on registration, boys and girls may play together.

Senior Division

Dynamo Soccer is among the few soccer clubs that organizes recreational play for older teens. The Senior Division was created to provide an outlet for older children not interested in moving into the more competitive Travel League. This age group provides a venue for older children to play the game on a full sized field with a full complement of players.

The Indoor League

During the Winter months Dynamo Soccer moves indoors to the St. Edmund's Academy Field House. Although administered by a separate Commissioner, the Indoor League is a recreational program that embraces the same philosophy as the outdoor program. The Indoor League encourages continued skill development in a fun and nurturing environment and provides a venue for winter exercise and team play. Although the Dynamo philosophy is conducted during the indoor season, the rules of the game follow that of normal indoor soccer.

The Travel League

Dynamo Travel League teams compete in PA West Soccer Association's Travel League against teams throughout Western Pennsylvania. Dynamo has become increasingly competitive over the years with a number of teams winning their age brackets at the annual Edinboro Tournament in the Spring.

Selection for play in the Travel League is made by the Travel Teams coaches during annual try-outs. The team tryouts are competitive and independent experts determine if a child has the necessary skills to play in the league. Information regarding the Travel League tryouts can be obtained from the Travel League Commissioner.

	Recreation League	Travel League	Indoor League
Season(s):	<u>Fall</u> (~Sept. - Oct.) <u>Spring</u> (~Apr. - June)	<u>Fall</u> (~Sept. - Oct.) <u>Spring</u> (~ Apr.- June)	<u>Winter</u> (~Dec. - Feb.)
Players :	500-750	300-400	400-550

Age Groups:	6U, 7U, 8U, 10U, 12U, Sr.	10U, 11U, 12U, 14U, 16U, 17U, 19U	6U, 7U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 16U, 19U
Field Players:	3-11 (varies by Age)	11	3-6 (varies by Age)
Practices:	1 per week	2 per week	None
Matches:	1 per week	1 per week	1 per week
Registration:	<u>For Fall:</u> mid June <u>For Spring:</u> mid Jan.	<u>For Fall:</u> mid June <u>For Spring:</u> mid Jan	mid September

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. 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 set policy implemented by the Commissioner and oversee operation of the league. 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. Solve disputes regarding interpretation and implementation of league policies.

Age Group Commissioners

The age group commissioners are restricted to the administration of team play in their age groups. There is a commissioner for each of the major age groups and they serve under the direction of the Recreation 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

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. 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 Group 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.

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

sponsored by our parent organization – PA West – provide yearly opportunities for training and certification at a variety of levels. Specific responsibilities for referees include:

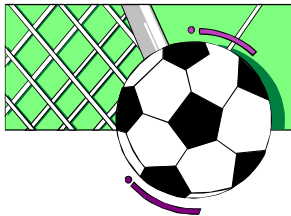
1. Ensuring that league rules are followed in weekend games.
2. Instructing players on the proper application and execution of rules and skills. This is particularly important in the Microsoccer Division of the recreation league, where referees are endowed with an instructional role during the game.
3. Ensuring that coaches and parents adhere to the “Dynamo Philosophy” during the course of a game.

Field Lining

Field Lining 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.

Team Coordinators

These the main task for these volunteers: Team Parent, Game Day Set-Up, are to assist the team, especially the team coach, with the running of team operations during game day. Team Parents help make sure that everyone knows the team schedule, helps with equipment on game days, can communicate with one-another about practice, and assists in making sure that the field is properly set up on game days.



General Coaching Information

First:

- 1) Meet your age group commissioner.
- 2) Contact your assistant coach; plan how to share the labor and keep him/her involved.
- 3) Acquire your team roster, schedule, shirts and equipment.

Within the first two days after receiving your roster, contact the parent of each child and pass on the following information:

- **Where and when** (day and time) the first practice will take place.
- **What each child should bring to practice.**
- **Ball**, of correct size for age group, marked with child's name.

Entry: MicroSoccer ball or Size 3.

U7, U8: Size 3.

10U, 12U: Size 4

Senior: Size 5

- **Shin guards** (absolutely required for all practices and matches).
- **Appropriate clothing**; shorts/sweatpants according to season.
- **Water bottle** for both practice and games.
- **What each child will receive at the first practice.**
 1. **Team shirt** to be worn at all subsequent practices and games.
 2. **Team roster** to help acquaint players and their families with one another.
 3. **Game Schedule**.

Before the first practice:

Plan out the practice (some suggestions follow):

1. **Timing**: 5 min warm-up, 30 min drills/games (curriculum), 15-20 min scrimmage.
2. **Focus**: only one skill per session (e.g., passing).
3. **Progression**: make drills/games successively more challenging (raise goals).
4. **Organization**: develop stations that players can rotate through.
5. **Style**: above all, **KEEP IT FUN** (and have fun yourself!)

At the first practice:

1. **Hold team meeting with parents** and explain the Dynamo Philosophy and Rules.
2. **Distribute Rosters and Game Schedules** (give directly to parents rather than kids).
3. **Distribute the team shirts** according to player size (lower numbers = smaller sizes).

Coaches and Parents: Role Models for Life

Coaches

What can they do to make the game of soccer more enjoyable for the players, and easier for the referee to manage?

1. Take a course on the Laws.
2. Be accepting of the referee's decisions.
3. Remain calm.
4. Do not make loud, offensive remarks.
5. Concentrate on coaching, rather than on the accuracy of referee's decisions.
6. Be a role model of fair play.
7. Be positive; avoid confrontation with any official
8. During games, leave the decisions to the players.
9. Attend coaching classes to learn the most effective ways to conduct practices.
10. Give good guidelines to parents.
11. Set high standards.
12. Be firm with parents at games.
13. Teach skills and fair tactics.
14. Discourage unfair gamesmanship.
15. Communicate with parents often in meetings and social gatherings.
16. Play the game and encourage parents to play and to referee.
17. Referee games.
18. Delegate responsibilities.

Parents

What can parents do to make the game of soccer more enjoyable for their children and other people's children?

1. Be knowledgeable of the game.
2. Encourage fair play at home.
3. Be supportive; get your children to practices and help others with conflicts.
4. Attend games.
5. Be positive or quiet at games.
6. Be respectful and expect your own children to show respect.
7. Focus on good nutrition.
8. Volunteer to help the coach.
9. Become a referee.

10. Play the game of soccer.
11. Be calm and have good manners.
12. Support the coach's and referee's decisions.
13. Encourage communication between coach and parent.
14. Ask your own children to describe his/her role, what new skills have been learned.
15. Watch practices; focus on new strategies
16. Find soccer videos and watch them with your children.
17. Concentrate on praising other people's children – on both teams – during games.
18. Instill pride in your team and league.

Soccer ... the game for kids!

Adapted from U.S. Soccer Magazine <http://www.usysa.org/index2.htm>

Game Day

BEFORE MATCHES:

1. Referees, linesmen, coaches and teams should arrive 15 minutes before the start of play.
2. Warm-ups must be conducted well away from any match in progress.
3. 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.
4. The referee will designate a team to call the toss. The winner may choose to kick off or defend a particular goal. The loser may choose the goal if the winner elects to kick off.
5. The team not calling the toss will provide the game ball.
6. 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 joint consent of coaches.

DURING MATCHES

1. Shoes should be tied at all times; referee will stop the game if necessary.
2. Neither spectators nor coaching staff may shout any instructions.
3. Players not on the field must remain in their team's marked box, 5 feet from the touch line.
4. Spectators are to remain behind the spectator limit line, separate from players and coaches.
5. Players, coaches, and spectators shall refrain from criticizing referees and linesmen.
6. Each player should play at least 50% of every match. Players are to be rotated among positions.
7. All players and coaches are to shake hands after each match. Good sportsmanship rules!

RULES VARIATIONS:

	U6, 7U	8U	9,10U	12U-Senior
Duration of Play¹	6 x 6 min	4 x 8 min	4x 11 min	4 x 12 min
Number of Field Players <i>Goalkeeper??</i>	3 No	4 No	7 Yes	8 Yes

Linesmen Provided by: Special functions:	No NA	No NA	Yes League Instruction	Yes League Instruction
Substitutions²	Between periods, at injury or referees discretion		Between quarters and once during quarter if necessary	
On incorrect Throw-ins:	2 nd chance	2 nd chance	No 2 nd chance	No 2 nd chance

¹ All matches, except last of day must end 5 min before the hour, even if match is not complete.

² The object is to maximize playing time and minimize downtime. The referee has final authority and agreements between coaches to not supercede referee decisions.

Important Safety Information

- Thunder and/or lightning immediately terminate any practice.
- 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 through the above scheme. This policy is overridden by the appearance of thunder and/or lightning.
- Referees can decide to stop play at any point in a match.
- Decision for canceling 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.