

# INFORMATION FOR COORDINATORS:

## SPECIFIC TEAM FORMATION APPROACHES AND CONSIDERATIONS

### PRINT OUT AGE GROUP INFORMATION

- You need each child's name, previous team, listed friends, and school.
- You also need to determine which parents have volunteered to be a coach, an assistant coach, or a team manager.
- You also need to know which parents have paid the volunteer fee so not to volunteer.

### IDENTIFY COACHES

- Start with your coaches from last year. If they worked out, confirm they will coach again. If you think a previous coach was not a good coach, confirm that with the Head Coach. If he concurs he will inform the coach that he will not be needed in the next season.
- Generally, two people who check off "Assistant Coach" can be put together to effectively make one coach for a team.
- Try to find two coaches per team.
- Find out from your coaches their preferred practice days and times (get 3 in order of preference). The coaches will ultimately have to confirm a date with their team and fill out the Gym Sign-Up form, but it helps you at the early stage of team formation to have an idea of their preferred practice day (for example, some parents will let you know that their child cannot practice on a particular day). The information will also help you in figuring out which assistant coaches (two to make a coach), or assistant coach and coach combinations can work.

**Also, please give the coaches a "heads up" that we need at least some of them to provide a 5:00 p.m. time as one of their ultimate choices for gym time.** The simple fact is that there are too many teams in the Club (from U6 through to U9 boys and girls) to give all the teams 6:00 time slots; and older teams will be given priority for the later times (i.e., if it comes down to a team not getting practice time, it should be one of the younger teams – in some clubs U6 teams in particular only have game days).

- If you do not have enough coaches from the registration sign-up for two coaches per team, do just one coach per team. The coach will likely be able to find a parent volunteer to help out as the season progresses.
- The other way to find coaches is to start forming teams around the coaches you have, and to then continue forming teams with those players who want to play together or go to the same school (you will also want to balance out girls and boys). Then approach the parents of those kids grouped together but for whom there is no coach, and tell them of the need for a coach. Usually, someone will step forward.
- You can also email your group of parents telling them of the need for more coaches and stress the urgency. Stress that the Club will give them assistance (see the last bullet in this section for details).
- Also, you can contact the Club Head Coach to see if (the previous season) he identified any parents who might be good coaches. You can also email or phone the Vice President of Boys and the Vice President of Girls to see if they know of any older players who may be willing to coach (do not though count on this).

- Assure all volunteer coaches (and those you are trying to get to volunteer) that the Club will offer a lot of help: coaching manuals; coaching clinics; professional assistance just for their team from the Club Head Coach; and three initial sessions of “one-with-one” with professional coaches (during which they can sit back and watch how to get started with the kids).

**PRINCIPLES FOR TEAM FORMATION**  
**(SEE ALSO THE CLUB POLICY)**

- **The overall goal is to create (as best you can) balanced teams. As the years progress, that will mean having to create new teams** (some teams will inevitably become dominant and others will be consistently weak – it depends on individual player development and the coaches).
- **Because breaking up a team is particularly hard after they have been together for more than one season, the Club policy is to do some changes respecting each team each year, i.e., create new teams with new names.**
- With some change each year for each team, players and parents get used to change and expect it. In the end, it also means that by U10 and U11 most of the kids “kind of” know each other (which is great respecting other community sports, and is very important at U12 when they are streamed and will be on a team with a whole cast of “new” players).
- History also shows that while at the end of a season a number of an age group’s teams may be balanced, virtually every year at least a few teams will be dominant and a few weak or very weak. (Balancing is never perfect. Knowing how players are playing at the end of one season is only a guide for the next season. It is useful but it doesn’t mean you can perfectly predict each player’s size, ability and keenness for the next season. Also, who is the coach can make a huge difference to a child’s development.)
- In addition to the above, history also has shown that it doesn’t work to only juggle a few of the teams (to try and achieve balance) and to leave the others intact. The first thing that can happen is a greater domino effect that you planned (you still have to work to make sure every child has at least one friend on their team). Also, if only some kids are moved, parents of those kids can get very upset, feeling that their children are unfairly targeted. Also, almost inevitably before the end of mini, the “intact” teams for a season or two will have to be adjusted. Particularly when they have to be made “weaker” (i.e., they are winning everything and other teams are losing badly), if they have never before experienced change, breaking them up can be very stressful to them (especially the parents), and for you as the coordinator...you will be the person to whom they direct their upset and anger. Also, at the micro and mini ages there are always a number of new players registering each year. If all the teams more or less stayed together, all the new players would have to be put together. The resulting “new” team would be weak and the established teams would keep getting stronger. Our mandate as a Club is to do the best we can by as many of the players as we can.
- **For all of the above reasons (all experienced at different times in our Club and others), and after a great deal of research respecting what other Clubs do (no Club has found the perfect answer), and what research says about making the sport experience the best for children, our Club’s policy is to create new teams, with new names, each year at micro and mini.** Having said that though, it works best to move the players in groups of 2 or 3 (or even 4 as your teams get bigger). The term

“massaging” is sometimes used. Just be sure that no one team is left completely intact. That will open you to accusations of favoritism.

### **NUMBER TO FIT ON A TEAM/NUMBER OF TEAMS:**

- The maximum number on a team should be double the number you have on the field at one time. That way no child has to sit out more than one shift. We want each child to be on the field as much as possible (to learn and not get cold).
- The minimum number should allow for at least 2-3 substitutes (there will always be absentees).
- From the above, you can work out how many teams you will need.
- When doing your 1<sup>st</sup> “go around” forming the teams, a good rule of thumb is to start off with one less than the maximum you will place on a team (this is so, particularly, if you know the players to be a keen bunch and likely to attend each Saturday). A number of children register well into September and their parents do not volunteer to coach. They can be the last player on a team.
- Rarely consider putting more than the “double” the number of players on the field on a team. It would mean not enough playing time for all the players if they all attend games. It can only be done if it is known ahead of time that a child already on the team is likely to miss a number of games because of health, or skiing commitments, or the like, and (most importantly) if the coach agrees.

### **PRACTICAL STEPS FOR PUTTING TEAMS TOGETHER:**

1. From the number of registered players, determine how many teams (and coaches) you will need.
2. Identify your coaches (if there are enough, put two on one team – either those who have asked to coach together, or whose children want to play together or two who can practice on the same day). Then start a team around them. For example, if there are two coaches, their children and a friend for each will form the first 4 children on the team.
3. Next do up a chart of who wants to play with whom, and the school each child will be attending. Record also their player evaluation rating, and make note of any problems with attendance or “coachability”.
4. For new players to the Club who don’t request to be with anyone, record their school and make every effort to place them with at least one other person who goes to the same school. Also, phone their parent and tell them you would like to ask some questions about their soccer experience so to help best balance the teams (parents can be surprisingly accurate in how they assess their child’s ability – explain that a “1” is a child who really doesn’t get in the game or kick the ball, and maybe doesn’t yet understand positions and passing and the like, while “5” is a keen player who goes for the ball and has ball skills, etc. If their child has not played soccer before, ask about their general athletic ability.
5. Now, look at adding to each team either (for example) a pair of additional friends of the children already on the team, or a pair of friends who want to play together, or a pair of children from the same school as kids already on the team, or a pair of kids who didn’t request a friend but who will go to the same school.
6. Don’t get obsessed about getting all of the teams exactly balanced (i.e., within a few decimal points of each other) per the ratings given to the players by their previous season’s coaches. The ratings are only rough guides. However, do not have huge discrepancies between the team averages (for example, one with an average of 4.0 and another with an average of 2.8).

**Do not make any “guarantees” to any parent about team placement until all the teams have been finalized.** Changes **will** be necessary right to the very end!!!!