

Harvard Soccer Club Parents' Guidelines

Soccer, like all other youth sports, is meant to provide your children with an opportunity to have fun in a group environment. Learning how to love and enjoy an activity is the key to progress in any sport. In order for your child to benefit from the experience, you need to be an active supporter in the process of learning. Personal growth and achievement cannot be forced, it can only be encouraged. Here are seven tips to help your child succeed:

1. Support the coach. Think of your child's coach as his/her teacher. While in the team setting, it is the coach's responsibility to focus on specifics of teaching skills and running the games. It's the parents' responsibility to praise their child's effort.
2. Recognize what your child and the team is trying to do, not the result. Your child is learning the game and mistakes are an important part of learning.
3. It's very easy to get emotional on the sidelines of your child's games, but remember that it is confusing to a child to have many adults yelling different things to them. Avoid yelling directions (Shoot!, Get Open!, RUN!!) and focus on encouragement and positive reinforcement (Great effort!, Great idea, Good try!). Obviously avoid pacing the sidelines and yelling negative comments like, "what are you doing?" and "wake up out there!".
4. Foster the educational benefits of your child's participation in youth sports. Leadership, commitment, goal orientation and preparation are life lessons taught through youth sports, and are even more important than athletic benefits.
5. Be a good example and support the referees. Many of the referees are young and are learning from their experiences in the game. Mistakes will be made. Respect their efforts and encourage your kids to do the same. HAA & NVYSL support the zero tolerance policy for berating or verbally assaulting refs which states that "No coach or spectator is to address the referee during the game!"
6. Teach your child, through your example, how to be a good sport. Keep in mind that excessively loud or inappropriate parental behavior on the sidelines is embarrassing to you, your child and your child's team and reflects poorly on the whole town program.
7. Share the experience together. Encourage your child to work on skills at home or with friends in a non-team situation. Take some time to play with your children in this type of setting. You will both benefit.