

**Revised: February 15, 2020**

**Dear Travel Soccer Parents and Players,**

Welcome to Rye Youth Soccer (RYS). We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the philosophy and objectives of the RYS Travel Program.

### **RYS Philosophy**

During the first two years of travel soccer—known as the “Developmental Phase” and encompassing the U-9 and U-10 seasons—our primary goal is to help your child transition from the smaller-sided Intramural and Pre-Travel phases to a larger-sided 7 v 7 experience. Our emphasis is squarely on player development and fun. Beginning at the U11 level and continuing through the U19 level, we attempt to maintain the emphasis on development and enjoyment while also introducing elements of competition (i.e. the league begins to publish standings at the U11 level).

The travel program encompasses 10-week Fall and Spring seasons. Opposing teams can be from neighboring Westchester County towns, Manhattan and the Bronx. All teams will train twice per week (one midweek and one Saturday). To promote a sense of club unity and spirit, all teams within an age group practice at the same time and location.

During the first year of travel soccer, our U9 teams are typically divided into two B+ teams and two B- teams that are known by their names (i.e. Rovers) rather than their ability level designations. Since children develop at different rates, the emphasis during the U9-U10 period is on developing technical skills (dribbling, passing, striking, defending). All players who attend training on a fairly regular basis play a similar amount of time and should get a chance to play many positions, including goalkeeper. The only reason a player may have less playing time at this stage would be if he or she shows a lack of commitment to the team by missing too many practices or games. Once children reach the U11 level, their playing time can more closely mirror their level of commitment to the team as seen through attendance, engagement during sessions, and ability. Children who are fully committed to the team but may be less skilled than their teammates should play at least 40-50% of each match (depending on the number of players present).

Throughout all phases of the travel soccer experience, we endeavor to encourage a "club" ambiance in which everyone – players, parents and coaches - has fun and enjoys their soccer experience together.

### **Parent Coaches and Age Group Coordinators**

Please remember that all parent coaches volunteer their time and effort and must attend a coaching class. The parent coaching team is selected and approved by the RYS Board to provide a mix of people who have knowledge of the game, experience as players and coaches, and enjoy teaching children. These coaches are responsible for ensuring a positive experience for all their players and are accountable for their actions to the RYS Board and to the Westchester

Youth Soccer League (WYSL) and its referees. This holds true whether at practices, games, or tournaments. RYS typically maintains 3-4 coaches per team (1 head coach and 2-3 assistants), who are registered with and carded by the WYSL.

RYS also assigns an age group coordinator (AGC) to assist with communications and coordinating administration requirements. As of August 2019, the AGC role is exclusively an administrative one. Since each age group consists of multiple teams with up to 16 parent coaches, the AGC is responsible for overseeing the functioning of the age group. Responsibilities include recruiting parent coaches, communicating RYS policies and schedules with families, facilitating logistics of tryouts (i.e. registration, sign-in), and serving as a liaison between parents of players and our staff coaches and Division Heads. The AGC is vital to the functioning of each age group but does not have any role or input in player selection or placement.

### **RYS Staff Coaches**

RYS provides a staff coach for each of its 40+ teams. Staff coaches are responsible for providing proper development and training activities that maximize player development. As a club, we continue to invest a lot of time and resources into improving and maintaining the level of coaching that our staff delivers. We appreciate your feedback on season-ending surveys, and of course we welcome your feedback at other times.

### **Division Heads**

Beginning in August 2019, RYS revamped its leadership structure in an effort to improve the quality of its many programs. We now have Division Heads who are in charge of the Intramural (U6-U7) and Pre-Travel (U8) stages as well as each of our Travel stages: U9-U10, U11-U12, U13-U14, and U15-U19. Division Heads will run each phase of our program, and as a result they are well-positioned to know all the players, make important roster decisions, mentor staff and parent coaches, and ensure the success of each phase of the RYS ladder.

### **Parents**

Parents play a crucial role in the success of RYS. We ask the parents to respect and support the coaching team at all times, and to show them respect in front of the players. Parents should adhere to the following three rules during all games:

- Do not talk to the referees
- Do not shout instructions to the players - this is the role and responsibility of the coaches. You may very well yell advice that contradicts what the coach has told the player to do.
- If your child gets hurt during the game (which happens very rarely), you are not allowed on the field. Only the coaches are allowed, and they must wait until the referee signals them.

Of course, we encourage you to cheer enthusiastically for your team during the game. In fact, the WYSL has a sportsmanship award given to one team in each division that accumulates the most "good behavior" points as judged by the referee, who rates the behavior of coaches, players, and parents for each game. RYS takes great pride in winning these patches, which the players get to sew on their jerseys.

## **Players**

Last, but certainly not least, the players must be committed to the game of soccer and their teammates. Since soccer is a team endeavor and a skill-based sport, the player who consistently misses practices and/or games is doing a huge disservice to all others who participate. While we encourage our players to participate in multiple sports, we also require that players regularly attend practices or games. Each year, we regret having to turn away many children from participating in travel soccer due to league limits on teams and due to Rye's field limitations.

If children have a conflict, we ask that parents inform the coaches in advance. As children get older—particularly once they are in the U15-U19 division—they should take the initiative to communicate with coaches about these absences. Timeliness is also crucial. Please arrive a couple of minutes ahead of the scheduled arrival time and please wear your RYS training gear (silver shirt, black shorts, soccer socks, shin guards, cleats). Be prepared with the proper size ball (Size 4 for U9-U12, Size 5 for U13+) and a water bottle. Attention to all these details helps ensure that our sessions run smoothly.

## **In conclusion**

Finally, we encourage all parents and players to communicate with the coaching team directly and at the appropriate time. A regular and positive dialogue is the cornerstone of a rewarding program and an enjoyable soccer experience for all.

Thank you,  
Rye Youth Soccer Board