

Meyerland Soccer Club Rules

Greetings MSC in-house coaches and parents of our players:

1. Uniforms will be ordered normally in sets of 12. If you have kids that are big or small for their age, please let us know so we can modify our standard package.
 - 1a. Most Teams are approaching the limit of 12 players. We have few spots left on various teams. Let me know if you are unable to contact a parent on your roster or they are a no-show.
 - 1b. I will draft, distribute and post a tentative game schedule. Games are set to start 9/16/12. At u6, the first THREE games are pre-season – split field 3v3. Then, u6 has three more 3v3 games, then 4 full field 7v7 (including the tournament games). At u8, after the first 3 pre-season games, u8 will play 6v6 or 7v7 (including goalies). At u9-u11, after the first 2 pre-season games, they will play 6v6, 7v7 or 8v8 (with goalies).
2. **FIELD/GATE ISSUES: I CAN NOT EMPHASIZE ENOUGH HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO LOCK THE GATE AFTER OUR PRACTICES AND GAMES. GATE MUST BE LOCKED AFTER ALL PRACTICES AND GAMES.** WHEN SOME TEAMS WERE WITH A FORMER CLUB, WE ALMOST LOST THE USE OF THE FIELD A FEW YEARS AGO DUE TO THE FIELD BEING LEFT OPEN SEVERAL TIMES and some stranger walking onto the school campus during a school day. You can get codes for Merfish Field from Eric Bishop.
 - 2a. The first coach to show up opens the gate, be sure to use the chain and lock to lock the gate open (lock it back to the fence behind it). That prevents kids from playing on the open, swinging gate and also prevents the lock and chain from walking off.
 - 2b. Last coach leaving the field is responsible for locking the gate back securely. Before you leave, check with remaining coach to be sure they know they're responsible for the gate being locked. At Merfish, if the swim team is still there, they will lock up. If the gate gets left open I get a call from the JCC or the School Principal and have to go talk our way out of trouble with them. HISD is of course concerned about the children's safety (as are we all) and that someone comes in through the open gate during off hours (or school hours) and steals something or vandalizes the school. Please be sure to usher out any lingering parents/kids/extra cast members at the end of the game or practice and lock the gate. I hate having to go to the principal's office to talk us out of trouble.
 - 2c. After games, the last coach left at the field needs to take the corner flags for BOTH fields and make sure the soccer staff have them and the goals. See if they need any help getting stuff back to the Merfish Center
3. **BEHAVIOR WHILE ON THE FIELDS – POSITIVE CHEERING:** We are guests of Elementary schools, Houston Parks and the JCC, and all of our behavior reflects on the club. Schools and the City of Houston are under no obligation to let us play on their field. We do help maintain the field, but if tales of bad behavior on or around their field reach their ears, they will not allow us to continue using it. Several of us have worked very hard over the years to establish and maintain a good relationship with schools and I want it to continue so we have a quality field to play soccer on. The facilities manager always shows up un-announced a few times during the season just to check things out. The three biggest rules are no pets, no smoking and pick up trash.
 - 3a. I encourage all coaches and parents to cheer heartily for their kids playing soccer. Soccer is a very exciting sport, but everyone (PARENTS AND COACHES) needs to keep these games in perspective. Please ensure all your parents cheer in a positive and encouraging way. Also, parents shouldn't try to "coach" their kids from the sidelines. Let the coaches do the coaching.
 - 3b. No yelling at any referee either. We occasionally have to use a parent as a referee when all of our regular refs are out calling older division games and I'm sure you don't want to get yelled at either. Many of the

referees are our soccer staff or are older siblings of the players or past Meyerland players. You would not want you child who is refereeing get yelled at or scolded, correct?

- 3c. I hold coaches personally responsible for their own behavior and for the behavior of the parents on their teams. I'm not overly worried about this, I just have to say it, it's part of the job description. I have had (almost) no trouble in this area in the past and I'm sure everyone is going to have a great season.

These are all in-house games, which means we're all in the same club, Meyerland Soccer Club, so tell the parents to keep their shirts on. Literally and figuratively, there was a parent a few seasons ago who would take off his shirt periodically. The shirt covered up a lot of ugly and I didn't really want to see it. ;-)

4. Someone asked if we were keeping standings this season. The answer is no. In the past, we have kept some standings and had a playoff series at the end of the season, but we added a tournament and I schedule the final games as competitively as possible. I got good and bad feedback from standings in the past. It's open for discussion for next season, but no playoffs this season.
5. No dogs or pets of any kind on the field or inside the gates of any fields. HISD rule and we have to follow it. If one of your parents shows up with a dog, please explain to them nicely that HISD does not allow pets on their fields. I am sure the JCC has a similar rule.
6. Don't leave trash of any type on the field. Pack it in, Pack it out. We should have pride in our field and not trash it up. Tell your parents about this also. Bring a trash bag for you snack refuse. We've gotten in trouble for this in the past also but have done better recently.
7. If your parents have any issues with the field, they should bring it to the coach's attention and then the coach should bring it to my attention. Don't go to the school, JCC or the City of Houston for any field related problems. We should be invisible to them.
8. Likewise with your games, if a parent has any issues with the field, refereeing, player or parent conduct, they should bring it to coach's attention and then coach should bring it to my attention. We will deal with the problem in a professional manner together.

RULES OF PLAY

If you have to rely on these rules and are trying to interpret these rules, you are probably already losing the overall spirit of Meyerland soccer. Yes, we want to have competitive games and good soccer, but more importantly, we want the kids to have fun. Thus, if it gets too competitive at THIS LEVEL (again, these kids are all 5th grade and under), this is likely not what is best for the kids. Yes, we have very good soccer players at Meyerland, and yes, we want kids to get better and learn great soccer skills, but we also want to keep things in perspective – this is NOT World Cup Soccer. If a player really wants to play at higher levels, there are other teams that can play outside of the IN-HOUSE program that have increased competition (yes, I am even trying to schedule games against other clubs).

- 1) All players must get as close to equal playing time as possible if they are willing to play, regardless of their ability. Every player who checks in **MUST PLAY AT LEAST HALF THE GAME**. If you have players missing, divide the extra time as equally as you can. The only exceptions to this are if a player is injured or overheated or otherwise unable or unwilling to play. Coaches are strongly encouraged to have kids play different positions. Try to have every player play every position as the season progresses.
- 2) For pre-season games, they are called "split field 3v3 games." For u6 players, if needed, parents can be on the field to help out. Depending on the number of players that show up for the teams, you will have 2 or 3 games going on simultaneously. I purposely tried to pair veteran teams with new teams so the new coaches can learn from veteran coaches. For all age brackets, the first TWO games will be 3v3. Teams will put 3 players on a small field, the other team trots out three players, and then there will be 1-2 other 3v3 games

being played (so the teams will have 6 or 9 players out playing each quarter). So if each team has 10-12 players, there can be 3 games going on at once. Play FOUR quarters of about 6 to 8 minutes each (but coaches can agree to lengthen or shorten, in their discretion). There will be no “refs” for these games (other than the coaches helping on the fields). **BIG TIP** - discuss with the other coach what field will have the more experienced or aggressive players (thus, for example, one field may have good, experienced soccer players, another field, average players, and the last field, beginning players). In other words, I like to match players with other players that are not overly aggressive so one of them is “forced” to play the ball. Use these games to really help the kids develop. Do plenty of cheers as beginners will be timid at first. Make them as fun and as low-pressure as possible. At u8, one coach is on one 3v3 field being the ref and the other coach is on the other field. Put your assistant on the other field with the other coach. ALL coaches coach ALL players. These should be VERY fun games. At u6, as needed, parents can even be on the fields for the first 2 games. I hope to have all players on each team score goals during these first few games. Scores should not matter. Yes, flower pickers are welcome.

As mentioned below, after the first 3 games, u8 players will then play full field games, 6v6 or possibly 7v7 with goalies (and refs). U6 players will play 3 more “regular” season games of 3v3 games (hopefully, parents will no longer be on the fields), and the last 4 u6 games will be full-field games with goalies (and refs). At u9-u11, after the first 2 pre-season games, all other games will be full field.

- 2b) We must switch ends at half time. Always.
- 3) For U7/8 and above, we follow the basic rules for substitution during the game (U5/6 can sub at any stoppage, with the referee’s permission):
 - i) During live play you may only substitute players on a throw-in or goal kick for YOUR team, and you MUST ask for the permission of the referee first. He/she is at liberty to say no for any legitimate reason (say, if they feel that you waited too long to ask or something). IF the other team has been granted a sub on THEIR throw-in or goal kick, you are at liberty to ASK FOR ONE too.
 - ii) Both teams may ask to sub on a kick-off or a drop-ball.
 - iii) An injured player may leave the field at any time and be substituted at the next stoppage of any sort.
 - iv) NO SUBS ON ANY SET PLAY (free kick, corner kick)
 - v) At u9 and above, other rules will apply, such as offsides, etc.
- 4) **ONE-SIDED GAMES**. As a coach, I have been on both sides of this one. Sometimes, for whatever reason, kids on one team are having an off-day, and the other team starts scoring goal after goal. Sometimes, a team only has a few players show up. Sometimes, a veteran team can be more talented than a “newer” team. I ask all coaches to try to be reasonable in such situations.
- 4a. Nobody likes a blow-out, least of all me. If 1 team is ahead by 3 points, the other team may put in an additional player, if the score goes to 4 point differential, add another player. If more than 5 points, add more players. If it gets worse, have the scoring team subtract players or switch sides – overall, use common sense. Simply put, if your team is running away with the game, be a good sport and let the kid who is the scoring machine play goalie or defense and learn to pass. That helps the less talented kids get a chance to play the ball more and the more talented kids get experience playing defense and learning to pass to team mates. It’s also called good sportsmanship which is one of the prime lessons we’re trying to teach in our Soccer Club.
- 4b. Soccer experts talk about the slanted bar principle. If 1 or 2 kids are scoring all the points, that child should be challenged to pass to other players so they can be challenged to try and score themselves. Encourages

team work and increases everyone's skill level. Regardless, do whatever you have to do to avoid blowing out the other team and it makes for a better experience for everyone. Remember we're all in the same club.

- 4c. Use discretion and creativity. I have heard coaches say that if their team, scores again, they get negative points. I have seen coaches on both sides, work together and mix up the kids (although kids seem to NOT like this and want to "stay" on their team). I have seen coaches tell kids to not shoot on goal and pass to the goalie. Again, go back to a primary goal – keep it fun for the kids and try to turn such a situation into a fun and positive experience.
- 5) Spectators should not sit BETWEEN the two soccer fields. Other than this, spectators can sit anywhere around the outside of the field, except they must be more than 3 yard away from the touch (side) lines and more than 4 yards away from the goal (end) lines. The lines outside the field are the "Parent Lines" (the rule book appropriately calls these the "Restraining Line"). Please set any shade tents even farther back (far enough away from the field so no one will run into them).
 - i) Parents are not allowed on the field at all (with the exception being the first two or three games at u6, if needed).
 - ii) Coaches may go anywhere around the outside of the field during the game, except at least 1 yard back behind the goal line or away from the goal post (about an arm's length distance). Limit the number of people anywhere near the goal to one coach or asst. coach. (Don't let parents congregate near the goal) It intimidates the kids taking a shot if there are a bunch of people around the goal. If there is an injured player, coach should of course go out to attend to player. For the 3v3 games, coaches are on the field as refs or coaches for BOTH sides.
 - iii) As the season progresses reduce your interaction with the players from everywhere except one sideline, except for the occasional specific instruction. This will prepare them for the next stage of their soccer lives.
 - iv) No pets allowed on the field or inside the gates of any fields. No dogs, hogs, cats, rats, bats, coons, loons, armadillos or chinchillas. HISD's rules. The HISD facilities manager shows up periodically during the season to check on how things are running. If he sees dogs on the field, he calls the principal, and it goes downhill from there. Thus, no dogs allowed on the fields.

RULES OF CONDUCT TOWARDS REFEREES – THEY ARE ALWAYS RIGHT AT ALL LEVELS (Remember the motto/saying the Boss/Mom/Dad is always right and if not, see rule no.1).

- 1) Always be supportive of the referee's decision, even if you disagree. Yes, even if you disagree and it is for the FIFTH time.

This is a training ground for our referees as well as for our players.

Don't make the call before the referee in an attempt to influence them.

Let the referee explain the players' mistakes to them - at this level the referee is also part of the coaching staff.

- 2) During the game the only time you may question the ref is to ask "What is the call?" if you are not clear. After the game if you do not understand why a call went against you, the referee is available to you to explain their decision. Please ask politely for an explanation. The purpose of this is ONLY to make sure you understand the referee's decision, and then the discussion is over. Don't offer an alternative view, even politely. If you feel a mistake was made then direct all your comments to me. I will pass them on to our Referee Coordinator if necessary.

- 3) Once the referee leaves the field of play ALL DISCUSSION of the game, even polite friendly discussion, is over. Don't approach the referee after this for any reason.
- 4) BEFORE THE REF LEAVES THE FIELD, PLEASE THANK THEM FOR THEIR HARD WORK. REMEMBER THESE ARE OUR KIDS TOO, JUST A LITTLE OLDER THAN THE PLAYERS. REMEMBER THAT WE WOULDN'T HAVE A SOCCER PROGRAM WITHOUT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COME OUT AND RUN AROUND IN THE HEAT. Maybe you could offer them a drink too.

CONDUCT TOWARDS PLAYERS

- 1) NEVER say, or even imply, anything negative about the other team. Remember the players on the other team are your players' classmates and their parents are neighbors. Please make sure your team parents understand this as well.
- 2) If your player makes a mistake, try to point it out in a positive way: "That was a good try Johnny, but next time try to keep both feet down" instead of "Come on Johnny, get your head in the game! Don't you remember practicing this?" These kids are no more than 11. They forget everything.
- 3) If a goal gets scored against your team, say only positive things to your players, and NEVER address one player in particular with a negative comment. If your player made a mistake then they already know it, and they will already be down. Don't make it worse by pointing it out to them in public. Make sure that everyone on your team knows that if a goal gets scored it is NEVER the fault of just one player. They should, of course, be shown how to do it correctly, but the time for that is at practice, when there is no pressure to perform.
- 4) Some players are naturally stronger, others weaker. Regardless of that please find something good that they did and after the game point it out. They'll play better next week if you do!
- 5) Enjoy winning if you are lucky, and congratulate the other team if you aren't. Don't let your players do any gloating, taunting, yelling "We won! We won!" or excessive cheering when the game is over. Many of them don't realize that this is poor sportsmanship.

IF WE WORK TOGETHER, WE CAN HAVE OUR BEST SEASON EVER.

Have a great season,

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Volunteer MSC In-House Director

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