

Welcome to the super spring season of Meyerland soccer. I am the VOLUNTEER in-house director of soccer for the Meyerland Soccer Club with the ERJCC, and I wanted to send you information about the Meyerland Soccer Club. I have a son, Steven, who started playing at U6 (under age six as of 7/31), and after many seasons, I still coach his U9-U11 team. I am also coaching my daughter Amanda's u8 Silver Dragons team. Below is information you want to know to start the season. Yes, it is long, but designed to answer many of the usual questions asked of the club.

I am excited about the upcoming season. If you have not played with Meyerland Soccer before, its entire goal is to make sure the kids have fun playing soccer. We are only as good as our volunteers, and please let me know if you can help out as a coach, assistant coach, team manager or other open volunteer positions in the club. The more parents that help with practice, the better. I ask the parents of veteran players to make the new parents and kids feel welcome. The BIG rule about HISD fields is NO PETS and NO SMOKING on the fields.

TEAM PLACEMENTS:

We have over 370 kids playing for 34 teams this spring season. Many teams are already full, and many more will fill up with friend requests. We bend over backwards to honor friend requests, practice day requests, team requests, etc. We got the requests you made with your registration form. If you did not make one, and if you want to make a request, please let me know. Plus, please keep spreading the news to help us fill up the remaining roster spots.

ORGANIZING TEAMS:

We need each team to set up their own communications system. I will send out periodic emails and we need the head coach, team manager and possibly a few assistant coaches to get the "coaches" emails and forward information to the team. I suggest that once teams are formed, all players on your team email each other to confirm everyone has the proper email addresses you want to use (and let everyone know any others you want to add for spouses, babysitters, etc.). I strongly suggest someone on the team step forward and be a Team Manager or Head of Communication. The Team Manager should also set up a drink schedule for everyone to volunteer to do one game per season where you bring snacks and drinks for a game. Plus, there will be a final team party (where all of the kids get trophies)! New teams will select their name at their first meet and greet.

WEATHER ISSUES:

- (a) The Meyerland Soccer Club rain out number is (713) 551-7209 ex. 6907.
- (b) The club will sometimes have to cancel games or practices. This is a difficult decision to make as sometimes it will rain and then one hour later, the sun comes out and things look great. Thus, such decisions are usually made shortly before the game or practice.
- (c) FOR LIGHTNING AND THUNDER - A child was struck a few years ago playing soccer (not our club). Treat this VERY seriously, and do not take chances. This is NOT world cup soccer and if we miss some or all of a game or practice, it is no big deal as we want to protect the safety of our kids. Moreover, if anyone sees lightning and/or hears any thunder (not just within 30 seconds), for the safety of our participants, treat it like pools do, and clear the field for 20+ minutes.
- (d) FIELD CONDITIONS - I have been asked a few times lately to provide guidance regarding when/ when not to use fields due to it being too water logged. We are slowly trying to improve the field conditions and quality of the grass on the field, so not tearing up the field when it is soaked and too wet is important.
- (e) There is a different standard used for practices vs. games. While I would allow games to proceed with a wet field and during light rain (with no lightning), using the field for practices when it is soaked and raining tears up the field and should be avoided. If there are people who show up and want to

practice during these times, a neighboring park next door should be used (or any other available semi-dry patch of grass). Neighboring parks appear to have higher elevations and they drain better.

- (f) I tell my team parents to show up for all games and practices unless specifically notified otherwise. Kids love to get muddy, but the parents like it less. Coaches will have to work that out with the parents.
- (g) If the club has not canceled practices or games, each team coach gets to decide whether or not to cancel practice their own practices (even if fields are playable). For example, teams can decide on their own as to whether or not they want to practice in rain, mist or other conditions (i.e. if clear, but bad weather occurred earlier in the day). For games, it will likely be game time decisions. BIG RULE – use common sense and if there is any threat to kids – NO SOCCER. If not fun (i.e. too cold or too much rain), think twice about playing. Otherwise, each team gets to make their own decision (or both coaches at the games). When it is soaked with small lakes in the middle and all over the field, then alternate practice sites (like neighboring parks) should be used. You can also have team bonding sessions under covered pavilions.

WHAT YOU NEED/EQUIPMENT:

The club will provide a uniform consisting of a jersey, shorts and socks (they should arrive around the time of the first game). For practices and games, please remember to bring TONS of water, cleats with no metal spikes and shin guards. You must have shin guards to play in the games that start in March, but try to wear them for all practices to protect your kids (if you do not have them for the first practice, that is fine). Please also bring a ball to practice (u6 and u8 use a size 3 ball and u11 use a size 4 ball), and check to make sure it is not too inflated or flat. Again, please make sure to bring PLENTY of water for your kids!

SPONSORSHIPS:

We want each team to have a team sponsor. It is only \$500. Can your team ask around for a team sponsor? If not too late, the sponsor's name gets put on the team uniforms. There are other sponsorships levels, including a \$10,000 league sponsorship. Please ask Eric Bishop for more information.

PRACTICES:

1) Practices will start on or after February 11, 2013. The first practice is a meet and greet with some fun games. You will have ONE practice per week (on a weekday night - either Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday). Practices usually last about an hour, and each team chooses their practice times (for example, many teams practice 5:30-6:30).

2) Location - depending on the team, most practices will occur at one of several Meyerland locations, including Lovett Elementary, Shearn Elementary, Longfellow Elementary, Johnston middle school, Merfish Center field or another local field. However, since it may get dark early in February, the club has gotten a permit to allow practices at Westwood park in February (under the lights). Westwood Park is right next to Shearn Elementary - and Shearn is just south of Loop 610 off Stella Link. Thus, your first few practices will likely be at Westwood Park before you switch to your normal location. More info later...

3) Other practice info - I tell my team to try to get there a little early. If a practice day is not good for you, please let me know as there is almost some last minute switching on teams due to practice day conflicts. The league is still accepting registrations and as long as we still have open spots, the club will accept registrations, and this means you can still encourage other friends to sign up and play (and have them do friend requests). So please keep forwarding the information about the league.

4) YES, the club allows people to bring friends to the FIRST TWO practices to allow a few, extra kids to "try out" soccer. Thus, invite a friend or two to attend (please tell them that if the final spots are first come, first served). BUT, the remaining spots on this team may get taken by people that register first!

WE NEED PARENT VOLUNTEERS - PLEASE EMAIL ME IF YOU CAN HELP:

We need a few parent volunteers to help out the teams. When we get all players added to the team, each team will need a head coach, team manager and other volunteers, but you can always use more. Plus, we want another 2-3 (or more) parents to be assistant coaches for each team. This is how I started coaching soccer. Even if you know little about soccer, all you really need is positive enthusiasm at this level. Do I have any volunteers (and yes, I show you what you need to know)? Please email me and let me know. At this level, the key is to make sure the kids have fun. If they learn some soccer (and they will learn a lot more than they think), that is a pleasant bonus. Your kids will REALLY appreciate your involvement. We need YOUR help to run a great club!

GAMES:

Most, if not all, of the games will be played on Sundays. The first few games will be "PRE-SEASON" games, and will be played 3 v 3 (no goalies). The first "PRESEASON" game is tentatively scheduled for SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24 OR MARCH 3, 2013 (time will be announced later, but games last about an hour and will likely be at 1:30, 2:30, 3:30, or 4:30 OR some games at some age levels start every hour on the hour (i.e. 1:00, 2:00, etc.)).

1) For u6 teams, they play 5-6 small field 3v3 games and then switch to full field 7 v 7 (with goalies) to give these players a taste of full field soccer for the last 3-4 games. Yes, parents can even be on the field at this level for the first few games. Each team of 10-12 players will have 3-4 games going on at the same time so each player should get tons of playing time. More info later to better explain.

2) For u8 teams, after the first 2-3 3v3 games, we will then play full field games that are 7 v. 7 including goalies (or as decided in the future). This way, kids get to experience both small field games and full field games.

3) For u11 teams, these first two games will be small field games, and the rest full field 8 v. 8 including goalies.

The first few games are VERY basic and informal and are designed to have the kids have fun. Kids play at least one-half of every game. The final games are fun and competitive, but we do not keep track of the records at this level. We do not keep any statistics. Games last about 45-60 minutes total with breaks, and they are scheduled on Sunday afternoons. Our last game should occur before Memorial Day. We also want to try to have a one day tournament towards the end of the season where each team will play THREE mini-games in one day.

TRAINING:

1) COACHES/VOLUNTEER training - We provide at least TWO FREE training sessions for our parents, assistant coaches and other coaches. Plus, you can request to take additional training, and the club will likely reimburse you those costs as well (but ask in advance).

2) For u8 teams, the club is paying for your team to have THREE professional training sessions with a professional trainer from BOSS training or from BreakAway Speed (about 1 per month). Thus, your team can decide how and when to schedule them (i.e. choose what days these special days will occur).

3) U11 teams will get FIVE training sessions.

CONDUCT ON THE FIELD ISSUES:

1) 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.

- 2)** 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.
- 3)** 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?
- 4)** I hold teams/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. ;-)
- 5)** 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.
- 6)** **NO DOGS OR PETS OF ANY KIND** on the field or inside the gates of any fields. This is an 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. No smoking as well.
- 7)** 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.
- 8)** 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.
- 9)** 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:

They are posted on our website and are discussed at the coaches meeting. If you have to rely on the rules and are trying to interpret the 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 (yes, I am even trying to schedule games against other clubs). We have an affiliation with a competitive soccer club, Houston Athletic.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

Again, the better organized a team gets, those teams seem to have the best experience. Parents can help set the tone for having a great team! One exciting thing I do with my teams is have a Team Players v. the Parents game at the end of the season (parents cannot run, cannot raise their feet to kick the ball, etc.), and I announce this early in the season, and the kids look forward to the opportunity to beat their parents (yes, on my teams, the kids ALWAYS end up beating their parents and they LOVE it). Again, at Meyerland, we want the kids to have fun learning soccer.

I am looking forward to a great season. We still have room for more players in the league. Thus, if you have child that has a friend that wants to play, there is still room on the teams to accommodate that request (each team usually has between 10-12 players). More information can be found at the club website at:

www.erjcchouston.org/soccer<<http://www.erjcchouston.org/soccer>>

Alternatively, they can call me at 713-220-9184 or Eric Bishop at the JCC (713-729-3200), or they can email me.

Lastly, there is Group on Facebook (Meyerland Soccer Club) that you can join and help us get the words out about our remaining spots.

Thanks,

Pat Huttenbach - Volunteer Director of Soccer
William "Pat" Huttenbach
(713) 220-9184 (work) or (713) 799-1341 (cell)
phuttenbach@hirschwest.com