



Parent's Handbook



The Game for All Kids!

www.CincyTOPSoccer.com

Welcome to TOP Soccer!

Thank you for joining Cincinnati TOP Soccer. Founded in 1998, Cincinnati TOP Soccer has had the joy of extending the sportsmanship, camaraderie and thrill of competition through soccer to hundreds of children with special needs. TOPS stands for **The Outreach Program for Soccer** and is a national program created to give young people with disabilities the opportunity to learn and play the game of soccer in a caring coaching environment.

The goal of Cincinnati TOP Soccer is to provide all children with physical and/or cognitive disabilities a place where they can safely participate in and enjoy the game of soccer.

The TOP Soccer program not only gives young athletes with disabilities an opportunity to play soccer, it also gives them a renewed sense of accomplishment and self worth. As the season progresses, we see not only improvement in athletic ability and physical stamina and but also amazing development in emotional and social well being. Children in TOP Soccer do amazing things; like run for the first time, kick a ball and score a goal in front of their peers and cheering spectators, build new and lasting friendships and generate smiles as big as all outdoors. Most importantly of all, they learn to believe in and be proud of themselves and realize that they are every bit as talented and wonderful as their non-disabled siblings and friends.

By providing a community-based training and team placement program for young people with disabilities, any boy or girl, age 5 to 18 who has a physical or cognitive disability will have the



opportunity to learn and play soccer and become valued and successful members of Ohio South Youth Soccer Association and the US Youth Soccer family.

Another goal of Cincinnati TOP Soccer is to prepare your players to move beyond us. We place a strong emphasis on learning new soccer skills and adapt our coaching to each player's ability. If we see a player progress beyond the ability

of those around them, we move them up or even help them find placement on local rec teams so that they may have the best playing experience possible. While typical TOP Soccer runs from age 5 through 18, we also have an Over-18 Unified division that pairs older athletes with special needs with typical peers on teams that play in regular recreational leagues around the city.

The bulk of our staff members have children who play in the league, so we truly understand the children and the struggles they go through every day. It is our sincere hope that Cincinnati TOP Soccer can provide a small respite from those struggles and enable your child to feel the sense of belonging and self worth they deserve. We will do our best to teach them and hope that they learn as much from us as we will undoubtedly learn from them. We also hope you will encourage other parents with children who have disabilities to enjoy TOP Soccer with us. It truly is "The Game for All Kids!"



Randy Corey
President
Cincinnati Top Soccer

What is TOP Soccer?

The TOP Soccer program has the same elements as standard soccer, including the spirit of team sports and strenuous physical activity. The unique thing about TOP Soccer is that the program can be modified to accommodate the special needs of individual players. The emphasis is on developing positive self-concepts and having fun, rather than on winning or losing.

A basic TOP Soccer program consists of two vital components.

- The first is a field site where soccer players with physical and/or cognitive disabilities can receive high-quality training to help develop their soccer skills. Training session could include basic exercises, drills and small sided games.
- The second component is an ongoing player assessment process that places participants in the most appropriate playing situation, including placement on non-disabled teams or involvement in programs established by other sports associations for people with disabilities (i.e., Special Olympics).

The results are dramatic and inspiring. Parents of special needs children are amazed at the positive impact playing soccer has on their child's self-esteem. Many children also improve their motor skills and over all physical stamina. Most significantly, as a result of playing TOP Soccer, these children enjoy the camaraderie of team sports and hear the cheers from proud parents, sisters and brothers on the sidelines *for them* – many for the first time.

Volunteer Leadership

President	Randy Corey <i>randy@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
Division Directors	
North Division	Bob Schindler <i>bob@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
East Division	Jen Hannah <i>jen@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
West Division	Mike Morency <i>mike@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
Over 18 Unified Division	Jim Myres <i>jim@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
Director of Coaching	Steve McCollum <i>steve@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
Treasurer	Lisa Corey <i>lisa@cincytopsoccer.com</i>
Occupational Therapy Advisor	Elizabeth Bauer

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FAQ

Who is eligible for TOP Soccer? Any child age 5 to 18 who has a physical or cognitive disability that delays or inhibits their ability to play soccer in a recreational or community league. Our players receive OT and PT as part of their education plan. Mental illnesses, learning disabilities, ADD or hearing impairments do not necessarily qualify a child for TOP Soccer. If there is any question about suitability, please ask. For players over age 18, please ask about our unified teams.

What are games like? Our games are a lot of fun! We don't keep score, we rarely have referees, and everyone is a winner! We do, however, play by "real" soccer rules even though we tend to let the rules slide a bit. For example, we don't use the "offsides" rule, nor will you see many fouls enforced. Come prepared to watch soccer the way it was meant to be played!

How are players placed on teams?

The safety of our players and fairness of the games are the overriding principles that dictate team placement. Athletes are placed on teams by ability and age. Players who dominate in their age group may be moved up to allow them to play at their full potential.

Dribblers: Typically ages 5-8. These are players that are small in size, limited in speed, and may need help on the field.

Shooters: Typically ages 8-11. These players have a better understanding of the game, need less on-field assistance and are learning to run, dribble and pass more effectively.

Wings: Typically ages 12-14. Once a player begins to dominate the game in Shooters, they should move up to Wings. Wings play on a larger field in a faster paced game. Wings typically have more stamina and are physically larger than shooters.

Kickers: This is our oldest bracket, typically ages 15 and above. We place our strongest players in this division.

How do I know about rain outs? Never wait for your coach to call you! Always check your email or call our voicemail number (rainout hotline) at 588-4980.

Do we keep our uniforms? We buy top quality uniforms that are designed to last for three years. After the third year, players are welcome to keep the uniforms and new ones will be issued the following season. At the end of the first two years with the uniform, we collect them after the final game and return them the following fall season. It is vital that the uniforms are treated with great care. Please follow the washing instructions carefully and do not permanently alter the uniform. Also, please do not wear the uniform to practice. The uniforms are only to be worn to games and other official events.

How can I make TOP Soccer a success?

Get involved. There are many opportunities to serve, both on and off the field. Let us know how you would like to help. Display a positive attitude. An enthusiastic spirit is contagious. Speak only encouraging words.

Rules for TOP Soccer

Players

- Players shall be children with physical and/or cognitive disabilities aged between 5 years and 18 years at the time of registration. Players require a medical clearance and parental/guardian approval. Parents/guardians are required to confirm that they know of no physical condition that would endanger the child or anyone they would come in contact with, as well as informing the organization should they become aware of such condition.

Safety Gear/uniform

- All players are required to wear shin pads
- All players will wear a full team uniform to identify teams

On-Field Buddies

- On-field buddies shall be utilized only when absolutely necessary; parents are encouraged to allow their child to play independently.
- Each player will be allowed a maximum of one Buddy on the field at any one time
- Buddies are to passively participate. NEVER drag your player around the field and do not impede or hinder other players.
- Be courteous of others' disabilities. Don't be afraid to ask questions and don't assume.

Parent/Guardian/spectators

- At least one parent/guardian must stay at the field with the player at all times during practices and games.
- All spectators will adhere to TOP Soccer code of conduct
- Must not intrude on the field except at the direction of the referee or coach.

Duration of Games

- Four 10 minute quarters with 5 minute breaks in between. (May be adjusted as appropriate)

Number of Players

- Team size may vary
- Typically 6 players per time on the field at one time depending on team size.
- There is no limit on the number of reserves or how often replacements may take the field

Play

- A Buddy may lead, instruct or otherwise encourage the player they are chaperoning
- A Buddy must not impede or hinder other players from taking or retaining possession of the ball
- A Buddy will be allowed to stop the ball but not propel the ball.
- The Buddy may only stop the ball when within contact of their player i.e. holding hands.

- The Buddy may not stop the ball in the goal area particularly they must not act to prevent a goal.
- The coach may at their discretion direct a throw-in to a particular player (e.g. one who has had little contact with the ball).
- The coach may, at their discretion, ask other players and Buddies to "hold back" while an individual player is given the opportunity to make contact with the ball.
- The coach may, at their discretion, halt play to give instruction, guidance or assistance to any player.

Limiting Players of Greater Ability

Where a player displays a dominance of the game to the extent that it prevents others making contact with the ball, that player may be limited at the discretion of the coach, such as allowing the coach or other suitable adult to propel the ball away from the player or the goal; limiting the player to one half of the field for a given period; other suitable actions as determined by the coach/referee.

HAVE FUN, FUN, FUN!

TOP Soccer Parent Code of Conduct

The essential elements of character building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these “six pillars of character.”

I therefore agree:

1. I will not force my child to participate in sports.
2. I will remember that children participate to have fun and that the game is for youth, not adults.
3. I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
4. I will learn and abide by the rules of the game and the policies of the league.
5. I (and my guests) will be a positive role model for my child and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and spectators at every game, practice or sporting event.
6. I (and my guests) will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, or parent such as booing and taunting, refusing to shake hands, or using profane language or gestures.
7. I will not encourage any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health and well-being of the athletes.
8. I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
9. I will demand that my child treat other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex or ability.
10. I will teach my child that doing one's best is more important than winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game or his/her performance.
11. I will praise my child for competing fairly and trying hard, and make my child feel like a winner every time.
12. I will never ridicule or yell at my child or other participants for making a mistake or losing a competition.
13. I will emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit my child over winning. I will also de-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
14. I will promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes ahead of any personal desire I may have for my child to win.
15. I will respect the officials and their authority during games and will never question, discuss, or confront coaches at the game field, and will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
16. I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all sports events.
17. I will refrain from coaching my child or other players during games and practices, unless I am one of the official coaches of the team.
18. I realize that animals can be very distracting and/or frightening to children. Therefore, I will NOT bring pets to any practices or games.