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McLean Premier Soccer Policy Guidelines

Introduction

Since 2003, McLean Youth Soccer (MYS) has been building a premier travel soccer program known as McLean Premier Soccer (MPS). MYS developed the MPS program after studying other successful programs across the nation and interviewing the technical staff involved with the highest-rated programs. The overriding goal was to better understand why kids stayed in some soccer programs longer and to build a soccer development program in the McLean community that is designed for the benefit the child and young athlete.

The MPS program is available to young children playing soccer beginning at U9 and continues through U19. The two overriding principles that drive the MPS program are first, a professionally developed and age-appropriate curriculum that is optimal for developing young soccer players, and second, program decisions are implemented and driven by a professional technical and coaching staff to benefit the child and the club.

It is the case that the majority of coaches that work with these age groups are well-intentioned parent volunteers, without the soccer and child development background necessary to properly train youth players. Yet they are faced with, arguably, the most critical period of the player's development.

Dr. Tom Goodwin, National Director of Coaching, US Youth Soccer

Purpose of These Guidelines

These guidelines set forth the policies with respect to MPS' goals, structure, responsibilities, operations, and finances. These guidelines are informational in nature and are intended to guide parent and player participants in the program and to help set expectations of players, parents, and coaches participating in this program.



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Sportsmanship and High Character in Youth Soccer

MYS' overriding goal with respect to all of its programs is to foster sportsmanship and high character in the context of the youth soccer experience. Therefore, MYS expects that each participant in the MPS program will demonstrate the highest standards of sportsmanship and character in and around any MPS activity.

Mission Statement

Within these goals and vision of the MPS program, MYS has adopted the following mission statement:

The MPS program strives to make soccer a pleasant, safe, and rewarding experience for premier soccer players on and off the field. The Club has a firm belief in the value of sports at the premier level in promoting the physical, mental, and social well-being of dedicated athletes and the MPS program will provide the best professional training, learning environment, culture, and competitive playing opportunities for all players at every level.

Age Group / Age Centric Approach

Across our programs, MYS embraces an "*Age Group Centric*" approach to managing its travel teams and believes this results in much better training environment and development experience for our players. This approach is a central principle of MPS training as well and emphasizes cooperative team-training, cooperative work among coaches within the club, and coach-driven player movement amongst our teams. To facilitate this approach, the Club's Technical and Travel Directors select senior coaches in the MPS program to be "*Age Group Directors*," and they are tasked with coordinating all activities of the teams within the designated age groups.

One hallmark of the MPS program is the recognition that youth players develop physically, cognitively, and emotionally at different times. In order to deliver the most age-appropriate player development curriculum, the MPS program divides its programs into three age group categories. These categories are:



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- Developmental (U9-U11)
- Competitive (U12-U14)
- Premier (U15-U19)

Developmental (U9-U11)

In the Developmental Age Group category, the term "*premier player*" means a player willing, and selected, to devote a significant amount of time and energy to soccer. Selection will be based on the player and family's willingness to commit the amount of time to the program and the player's athletic ability and skill level. Player positions on the field are not a consideration.

In the Developmental Age Group category, particularly U9-U10, the emphasis is not on developing winning soccer teams. In the Developmental Age Groups, the focus is on developing technically proficient players who over time, begin to develop into decision-makers on the playing field.

A written training curriculum, written by the MPS Technical Director and Age Group Director, emphasizes having fun and developing individual skills by maximizing the number of touches on the ball. Coach-driven player movement between squads is also embraced, if it aids the development of the young player. Our professional coaches serving teams in the Developmental Age Groups are selected for their dedication and commitment to the Club and this philosophy.

- ***Number of MPS teams.*** In U9-U10, there will generally be two or three designated MPS teams (depending on available player pool) per age group, with 10-11 children per team. Depending on player depth in each age group, there may also be up to three or four MPS teams. This decision will be made by the MPS Technical Director in consultation with the Age Group Director and Director of MPS.
- ***Small-sided play.*** U9-U10 teams (boys and girls) play small-sided games of 7v7 with GK. The teams play in WAGS, NCSL, and ODSL leagues (see Leagues).
- ***For U11 teams.*** U11 teams play small-sided games of 8v8 with GK and there are two designated MPS teams playing in WAGS and NCSL (two teams per



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league). A third MPS team generally exists as well, playing in ODSL (one boys team and one girls team).

- During the U11 year, a fourth MYS travel team may also be added to the age group and at the option of the team-parents, the team may be professionally coached by an assigned MYS/MPS coach, or in some circumstances, the coach may be a selected parent-volunteer. Parent-volunteer coaches must meet MYS/MPS license requirements, agree to work with age-appropriate training, work within the MYS/MPS age group management philosophy, and work together with the Age Group Director for the transfers of players.
- **Professional Coaching and Training.** MPS professional coaches in the Developmental Age Groups have a USSF National Youth License (or foreign equivalent), a USSF "C" License or higher (or foreign equivalent) and prior play at premier level (or foreign equivalent) and a record of training premier players in the Developmental Age Groups.
- **Evaluations.** The Age Group Director is responsible for ensuring that a verbal evaluation is provided to a parent of each player by the end of each season. The goal of evaluations is not to criticize, but to enhance future player development and performance.

Competitive (U12-U14)

The intensity of the training increases in the Competitive Age Groups and the term "*premier player*" means a player who has shown the promise to play soccer at a high level. By this age, the player (and his or her family) will have shown the commitment to develop himself or herself into a premier player. MPS teams in this category are expected to make strong showings at both Virginia State Cup tournament and regional elite / premier tournaments.

- **Number of MPS teams.** Our Competitive Age Groups will continue to have two MPS teams at U12 (8v8), however in most years, a single MPS team will emerge at U13 and U14 when the players begin full-sided 11v11 play.



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- **Professional Coaching and Training.** MPS professional coaches for U12-U13 teams in the Competitive Age Groups have a USSF National Youth License (or foreign equivalent), a USSF “C” License or higher (or foreign equivalent) and prior play at premier level (or foreign equivalent). For U14 teams, MPS professional coaches have a USSF National Youth License (or foreign equivalent), a USSF “B” License or higher (or foreign equivalent). MPS coaches in the Competitive Age Group have a record of training premier players in the Competitive Age Groups.
- **Evaluations.** The Age Group Director is responsible for ensuring that each player and his or her parents receive a written evaluation of that player from the Coach or the Age Group Director by the end of each season. The goal of evaluations is not to criticize, but to enhance future player development and performance.
 - *U12-U13 MPS teams*, each player and his or her parents receive a written evaluation.
 - *For U14 MPS teams*, each player receives a written evaluation. The written evaluation is discussed only with the player.

Premier (U15-U19)

A premier player in the Premier Age Group category is a player who has demonstrated the ability to compete at the highest level of the age group and an interest in playing at the college level. MPS teams in this category are expected to make strong showings at both the Virginia State Cup tournament and regional and even national elite / premier tournaments.

- **Number of MPS teams.** The Premier Age Group category has one MPS team in each age group and the players play full-sided 11v11 games.
- **Professional Coaching and Training.** MPS professional coaches in the Premier Age Groups have a USSF National Youth License (or foreign equivalent) and a USSF “B” License or higher (or foreign equivalent). In addition, MPS Premier coaches are expected to have prior play at college level (or foreign equivalent), experience with the college placement process, and a record of training premier players in the Premier Age Groups.



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- **Evaluations.** The Age Group Director is responsible for ensuring that each player receives a written evaluation of that player from the Coach or the Age Group Director by the end of each season. The written evaluation is discussed only with the player. The goal of evaluation is to enhance future player development and performance.

Travel Leagues

MPS is a member of the following travel soccer leagues:

- National Capital Soccer League (NCSL) for boys
- Washington Area Girls Soccer (WAGS) for girls
- Old Dominion Soccer League (ODSL) for boys and girls
- Region 1
- Super Y League (summer 2007)

Team Tryouts

MYS is committed to holding open, fair, and unbiased tryouts for each MPS team at least once per year, usually immediately following the spring season. The Age Group Director and the team coaches determine the developmentally appropriate placement for each player selected. And while MPS tryouts are open to all, MYS may show a preference for current MYS players with a demonstrated commitment to MYS.

The MYS website is the primary source of information for the MPS and the Age Group Directors will be responsible for making sure that all tryout information is readily available on the MYS website.

Player Placement and Movement

All decisions to move a player between teams within an age group, or decisions to have a player "*play-up*" in an older age group, will be made by the team coaches and endorsed by the Age Group Director and Technical Director (in unusual cases). This decision will be based on which team offers the best learning environment to develop the individual player.



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For the benefit of the player's development, and in the spirit of MPS' age centric approach, a player may be requested to change teams between the fall and spring seasons, or from season to season. To participate in the MPS program, parents must be willing to sign the requisite VYSA forms indicating they consent to the movement.

Player Evaluations

The goal of player evaluations is to enhance future performance of each player. The motivation is not to criticize the player but to provide age-appropriate developmental assistance to each player. Each player evaluation is confidential and available only to the player, the player's parents, the relevant Team Coach, the Age Group Director(s), and the MPS Technical Director.

Player evaluation forms are available on the MYS website. The policy is to have verbal only evaluations in the Developmental (U9-U11) levels with the parents. In the Competitive Age Group a written evaluation is discussed with both the parent and child for those players on U12-U13 teams. At the U-14 level and above, written evaluations are discussed with the player only.

Coach Evaluations

In an effort to improve the MPS program, MYS also offers parents the opportunity to evaluate the Age Group Directors and coaches at the conclusion of each season using a convenient web-based system. MYS is always open to, and encourages, verbal or written opinions and comments regarding the MPS program in general and parents and players are welcome to contact the MYS/MPS board directors at any time.

Role of Parents: MYS is a Volunteer-run Organization

Parents serve a very important role within MPS. First, their reinforcement and modeling of the highest standards of sportsmanship and character is important in helping MYS achieve its overriding goal for these players. Second, their punctuality and attentiveness to scheduling can help the program run smoothly. Third, and perhaps most of all, their contributions of time to MYS activities (*e.g.*, fields, fundraising, etc.) and the MPS program are the key ingredients to the success of MYS and the MPS program.



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MYS is a volunteer-run organization and each year many important initiatives in our club, like new field development, are in great need of additional volunteers. There are many ways in which parents can help MYS. Contact the MYS Administrator for more information.

Team Manager

The team manager is the primary team administrative manager. This is an important volunteer role on the team and he or she handles the important day-to-day chores of an MPS team including registering the players with the league and for tournaments, maintaining player cards, and medical release forms and communicating routine team matters, including scheduling, with the team parents.

A team manager is not a technical manager of the team and has no responsibilities or standing in the technical or coaching decisions as they relate to individual players or the team itself. A team manager is afforded no privilege to advise the coach on player positions, player evaluations, or represent the coach in any official capacity.

Team Treasurer

A team treasurer manages the funds for the team. He or she collects and deposits the money received from parents into a team account (generally a non-interest bearing, no-fee checking account at a local bank). It is not advisable for the Treasurer to hold other volunteer roles on the team.

Team Sideline Liaison

The MYS / MPS sideline behavior is better than most clubs and leagues in the region, but as an organization, MYS feels it still has too many problems with appropriate parental behavior. As a result, MYS in keeping with our efforts to be on the forefront of best practices in youth soccer, instituted a program to deal with inappropriate parental behavior several years ago. The program is called the "*Team Sideline Liaison,*" or "*TSL, the voice of the child.*"

Today, travel leagues in the area (ODSL, WAGS, and NCSL) have already asked all



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travel teams to identify a parent (not the coach or coach spouse) to be the TSL and to help deal with sideline behavior issues and be a liaison with the ref. The program includes the identification of one or more TSL representatives for every MPS team.

MYS provides training (one session) by an experienced certified sports psychologist with a broad background in youth soccer. The training provides methods for dealing with problem-parents, role-playing for specific situations, and MPS' reporting process to bring in club officials if the problem persists. The training will be held prior to each season.

Other Parent Roles

The team positions above are the most important. Other parent-volunteer positions that a team might want to consider (and the responsibilities) are as follows:

- Tournament Director to assist the Team Manager in entering tournaments
- Public Relations to writes short updates, tournament results for the local newspapers and MYS website.
- Social Director to organize social events for team players and families
- Equipment Manager to organize ordering uniforms and other equipment

MPS Team Naming Conventions

Under VYSA rules, every MYS Travel team must have an official name registered with VYSA. The official name for an MPS team will begin with "MPS [year that cutoff begins]." Thus, the names of the U9 teams for Fall 2006 – Spring 2007 would start with "MPS 97" because the cutoff for U9 teams for that year is August 1, 1997.

The rest of the official name will be a combination of one of MYS official club colors, which are green, white, and gold. Thus, the official name on the record of VYSA for a U10 team for the Fall 2006 – Spring 2007 would be *"MPS 97 White."*

MYS also strongly encourages each team to adopt an additional (single) name for teams in each age group. This team name should be determined at the time of MPS selection and team formation at U9. For example, a U9 team could choose to add "Boca" or "United" to its name and become the *"MPS 95 Boca White"* or the *"MPS 95 United Green."*



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Team names must be approved by the MPS Director so as not to have duplicate or conflicting names in the MYS and MPS programs.

MYS/MPS Club Uniforms

MYS and MPS programs feature a single style of Adidas uniforms (home and away) for each player. MYS does this to achieve bulk discounts and heighten the visibility of the Club. Generally speaking, each player (in the developmental age groups) has a unique number within his or her age group so that he or she can easily guest play for a sister or brother travel team without worrying about conflicting numbers.

While not mandated, MYS does not encourage the placement of player names on the backs of MYS/MPS jerseys.

PJs Sports on Leesburg Pike in Falls Church is the exclusive supplier for MPS Adidas uniforms and equipment. Additional information, including ordering information on the club's standard uniform is available on the MYS website. All MPS families receive a 10% discount on all regular price items in the store.

PJs Sports
7500 Leesburg Pike #12A
Falls Church, VA 22043
703-506-8009
www.pjsports.com

MPS Patches

All MPS jerseys include the official MPS patch on the front of the jersey. As an option, teams may affix the MPS jersey to their playing short as well. PJs Sports will heat-transfer the patches at the time of team jersey order. MPS patches for tournament trading (if desired) are also available from PJs Sports.



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MYS/MPS Scholarship Program

MYS supports a scholarship program for players at all levels within the club. More information on the scholarship program is available on the MYS website, club treasurer, or club administrator.

Finances and Estimated Budget

The MPS program is financially self-sustaining and other MYS programs including the House or SFL programs do not subsidize its costs. Below are sample budgets for each age group:

Estimated MPS budgets 2006–2007 year (per player/year)

Age	U9-U11	U12-U14	U15-U19
Category	Developmental	Competitive	Premier
MPS fee (1)	\$750	\$550	\$550
League / VYSA	\$80	\$60	\$60
Tournaments (2)	\$200	\$300	\$500
Training and Coaching	\$650	\$1000	\$1300
Winter Indoor League fee	\$100	\$100	\$100
Uniforms (3)	\$170	\$170	\$170
Total	\$1950	\$2180	\$2680

Notes:

- (1) MPS fees include MPS Summer Camp and fall, winter, and spring MPS Training.
- (2) Tournament fees can vary depending on the number attended
- (3) Most players wear jerseys for 2-4 seasons, so annual jersey fee may not apply.

MPS Tournaments

To promote MYS Club and MPS identity at regional premier and elite soccer tournaments, each MPS team is required to attend (or at least apply to) four (4) MPS designated tournaments each year. Designated tournaments are:



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Month	Boys Tournaments	Ranking	Application
October (U9-U19)	Virginia Beach Columbus Day	Platinum	early August
November (U9-U14)	Bethesda Thanksgiving	Premier Elite	mid September
December (U15-U18)	Disney's Soccer Showcase	Premier Elite	mid August
March (U9)	PWSI Ice Breaker	Bronze	mid February
March (U10-U19)	Jefferson Cup	Premier Elite	mid January
May (U9-U19)	Potomac Memorial Day	Premier	mid March

Month	Girls Tournaments	Ranking	Application
October (U9-U10)	Virginia Beach Columbus Day	Platinum	early August
October (U11-U19)	WAGS Cup	Premier Elite	mid July
November (U9-U14)	Bethesda Thanksgiving	Platinum	mid September
December (U15-U18)	Disney's Soccer Showcase	Premier Elite	mid August
March (U9)	PWSI Ice Breaker	Bronze	mid February
March (U10-U19)	Jefferson Cup	Premier Elite	mid January
May (U9-U14)	FC Delco Players Cup	Gold	end of February
May (U15-U19)	PDA College Showcase	Premier Elite	mid March

For MPS teams in the Developmental Age Groups (U9—U11), the four designated tournaments per are only applicable to the Green and White teams.

Seasonal Sit-outs for MPS Teams with High School Players

Because Virginia high schools play soccer in the spring, many MPS players also want to play for their respective high school teams. Because this is overly physically demanding to young athletes, MPS allows an *entire team* to sit-out their spring league play (NCSL and WAGS). However, in order to maintain their MPS status players *must* register with MYS and pay a reduced MPS registration fee. This retains the team's MPS status and allows the players to attend MPS training sessions and schedule periodic team training on MYS fields.

Resources for College-Bound Players

MPS players U17 and older are provided with the opportunity to obtain college-recruitment counseling through MYS/MPS. This information includes a presentation from an MPS representative who will provide an insightful overview of the current



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options available to College-bound players. This initial consultation is available to teams and players at no cost. However, individual fees may apply if additional service is desired. Contact Director of MPS or MPS Technical Director.

Acronyms

MYS	McLean Youth Soccer (www.mcleansoccer.org)
MPS	McLean Premier Soccer (www.mcleanpremiersoccer.org)
NCSL	National Capital Soccer League (www.ncsl-soccer.com)
WAGS	Washington Area Girls Soccer (www.wagsl.com)
ODSL	Old Dominion Soccer League (www.odsl.com)
VYSA	Virginia Youth Soccer Association (www.vysa.com)
USYSA	United States Youth Soccer Association (www.usyouthsoccer.org)
Region 1	USYSA Region 1 (www.region1.com)
Super Y	Super Y League (http://supery.uslsoccer.com/)