

November 24, 2004

Welcome everyone to our first bi-weekly newsletter from AYSO Region 644 here in Weston, Florida. To the best of my knowledge we are the first AYSO region to offer an ongoing newsletter during the off-season.

Each issue of the newsletter is going to include information about what is going on in our region, registration information, news from our sponsors with postings of new items and possible discounts to our region. You will also be the first to receive your 2005 registration forms and materials to insure that your children will enjoy another season of soccer here in Weston. You will also find articles regarding soccer activities for on field players and goalkeepers, articles regarding youth sports and health issues. I think it will be very informative and information that you will be looking forward to receiving every other week.

In this week's edition, Section 1 is designated as the AYSO Region 644 roundup which will highlight what has been going on in our region over the past two weeks and what is up-coming.

Section 2 has an article written by Dave Simeone who is the Director of Coaching for Weston Soccer Club and a National Staff Coach for U.S. Soccer. This article "The Management of Youth Players: A Dilemma For Youth Coaches" delves into the challenges facing youth coaches and the development of our young soccer players.

In Section 3 we will have four articles outlining different aspects and activities related to the game of youth soccer. In the first installment of the Keepers Corner we will help aspiring goalkeepers learn that proper practice and concentration will equate to success. In our Tactical Section we explore the proper tactics, positioning and movement of defensive players. Our Soccer Activity Section will deal with a specific activity to enhance a player's ability to take on defensive players 1 on 1. Finally, we will discuss the soccer positions on the field and their responsibilities.

Section 4 of this newsletter will highlight two articles, one from the Burlington County Times in New Jersey which reports on an ever growing problem in youth sports- Sports Rage. The second article is from the Palisidian-Post in California regarding a AYSO VIP program in Pacific- Palisades California.

Finally Section 5 is written by Dr. Patrick Felton from the South Florida Institute of Sports Medicine regarding issues affecting growth plate injuries, a rather common occurrence in our young athletes.

I hope that you enjoy our first edition of the AYSO 644 Newsletter. Everything we do here in AYSO is ever evolving. If you have any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to email to me at Strikersoccer1@aol.com.

Section 1- AYSO 644 Roundup

Registration for the Spring 2005 Recreational and Developmental Soccer Seasons are still ongoing. We will be accepting registrations at the pavilion by soccer field 4 at the Weston Regional Park from 9am until 6pm on Saturday December 4, 2004. Or you may download a registration form from our website at www.ayso644.org and mail it to: AYSO 644, 1112 Weston Road #225, Weston, Florida 33326.

The **U-5 and U-6 divisions** will play on Saturday mornings at the Weston Regional Park with no practice sessions. The fees will be \$75 and include 9 games, a full uniform and a soccer ball. The **U-7 and U-8 divisions** will stress skill and tactical development and will have two practices during the week administered by Dave Simeone and Sandy Davison, directors or coaching with the Weston Soccer Club. Games will be held on Sunday afternoons at the Weston Regional Park. Fees for the U-7 and U-8 divisions will be \$125 per player and include 9 games, a full uniform, a soccer ball and the practice sessions. The **U-10, U-12, U-14 and U-19** divisions will participate in a league format with one practice per week and all games scheduled on Saturdays at the soccer fields at the West Broward Community Church on Griffin Road. Fees for these division will be \$100 and include 10 games, a full soccer uniform and trophies.

Our region held a “Silent Saturday” on Saturday October 30, 2004 where we requested of parents and coaches to let the children play their games without being directed from the sidelines. We are highly grateful for all the support that we had from parents and coaches alike. We believe that it was very successful and for the most part was met rather favorably. Our region gained a lot of notoriety not only locally in the Sun Sentinel, The Herald as well as on newscasts on NBC 6 and WB39 but also nationally with articles appearing in the New York Times and radio interviews with stations in the northeast including Bridgeport, CT.

Our region held our first in-season referee party at Wings Plus on Sunday October 17, 2004. We always have an ice-skating and pizza party at season end in late January, but since we were so lucky to have so many new referees come out that our referee assignor, Pat Henderstein, thought that it would be a great idea to recognize the referees during the season as well. Approximately 40 referees showed up for wings, soda and balloons. Thanks to all of you.

Our AYSO section meeting is in Atlanta, GA from February 4-6, 2005. Any current board member or anyone interested in becoming a board member and who is interested in attending please contact me as soon as possible so we can make arrangements for you to go.

Our region has grown to an amazing 2,475 players. But with this growth is a need for more volunteers. If you have the time or can make the time available and want to help the children in our community, please contact me at Strikersoccer1@aol.com and we will get you on the road to the most satisfying thing you can do in your life...volunteering.

The board of directors have decided to change the U-7 and U-8 divisions away from the Commissioners Cup format to a festival style format. Each team will play at least 3 half games on Saturday December 18, 2004. Game times and pairings are listed on our website at www.ayso644.org as well as in the Dribbles and Kicks weekly newsletter that is both in hard copy on game days and online.

Coaches, do you want to lock in your practice times and days? Avoid the long lines for picking your practice days at the coaches meetings and don't get locked out of coaching next year by not getting your volunteer application in on time by just emailing me at Strikersoccer1@aol.com . Please indicate your child's name, birthdate and the days and times you would like to schedule practices for. I will email back to you a confirmation of the time and field location, and you are all set.

Finally, we are always looking for sponsors. Our sponsors help defray the cost of running the program. Everyone in our region is a volunteer, however there are a lot of costs such as instructional books, uniforms, trophies, medals, city fees, etc. Please consider being a sponsor. Sponsorship packages can be sent to you if you are interested. It is great exposure for your business and the 3,000 children and families from AYSO and Weston Soccer Club that will see your banners, website listings, t-shirts, newsletter designations will greatly appreciate it.

Section 2- Coaching Philosophies and Child/Player Development

THE MANAGEMENT OF YOUTH PLAYERS: A DILEMMA FOR YOUTH COACHES

Dave Simeone
WFSC Technical Director
National Staff Coach - U.S. Soccer

Handling discipline problems presents a distinct challenge for youth soccer coaches. Many coaches are inexperienced in dealing with discipline or even identifying real problems versus child's play. Many coaches mistake immature behavior, which would be appropriate for youngsters, for behavioral problems.

A few factors influence the typical inexperienced parent / coach:

- a. FALSE EXPECTATIONS: inexperienced youth soccer coaches begin with personal expectations of what goes on during games or practices. These expectations are, sometimes, unrealistic; parent / coaches can lack perspective. They neglect acknowledge that soccer is a game. Games and sports for youngsters provide an environment for play in a child's world. These coaches encounter reality in their first session with youngsters. They find out very quickly that working with youngsters does not meet their expectations of "coaching". This, in turn, causes feelings of fear and anxiety. These inexperienced coaches may, at times, react abruptly and may not successfully handle coaching youngsters.**

- b. **PERSONALITY & ATTITUDE:** Inexperience with soccer and dealing with kids can result in a "controlling" approach or attitude. Not many youth coaches understand the implication of players enjoying their personality and that this, in and of itself, is a huge quality of successful youth coaches. Not many coaches understand that "coaching" isn't an issue of control. "If youngsters like me...I can't control them," or "I can control them, but they won't like me." For instance coaches can be over-ambitious and focused on results, performance from an adult perspective and become brittle and harsh with youngsters. Let's face facts – it's impossible to love the game when you are alienated by the personality of the coach.

- c. **LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY:** Many times, inexperience creates challenges in coming to grips with their inability to "manage" these situations. These coaches tend to blame players, solely, for problems. Some, on the other hand, allow serious problems (parent management, long term player development) to occur. There's a lack of insight which would allow them to prevent such situations from happening time and again.

Competent coaches manage people / players effectively through a more realistic approach. There are several factors associated with effective management of players relating to behavior:

1. Management of Time
2. Management of Environment
3. Effective Communication

The availability of time is limited when working with young players. Practices are usually scheduled twice weekly, anywhere from 50 minutes to an hour and a half in duration. This places a high priority on activities and play. The time that youngsters spend with the youth soccer and the coach is minuscule compared with the time they spend away from soccer, with family, in school or in other activities. Making the most of the time spent with youth players mean a realistic approach to spending the majority of the time in play.

The environment for youth players is a key ingredient. Creating the appropriate games, activities and conditions directly influence management and most importantly player development. Typically, youth coaches attempt to arrange and manage players by over-organizing them. They place them in lines, with unrealistic absolutes (always, never) that don't allow them to move and play. It's great for adults since it resembles the adult perspective of discipline and order. Soccer is a dynamic game; one that exhibits and includes movement of the ball and players. The organization of "play" has direct bearing on boredom versus stimulation as well as interest and learning. It's simple: there are no lines in "the game", let there be no lines at practice. The advertisement for the Sega computerized game product which emulates NFL football says it best: if it's in "the game" (The NFL and football), then it's in "the game". In one sense, those coaches who insist on over-organizing the environment are contributing to their own woes!

Effective communication has everything to do with all avenues to offer information. This includes body language, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, eye contact and *quality of content*. Simply, is the information useable in improving the player's enjoyment, development or performance? Emotional outbursts, yelling and screaming either at

parents, referees opposing coaches or PLAYERS is really unacceptable. This consistent behavior indicates a lack of patience and the necessary qualities to be effective as a coach.

What youth coaches ascertain is that discipline, behavior, attitude can all be somewhat related to management. The nature of youngsters is to run, jump, be inattentive (from an adult's perspective), change their focus at a moments notice or gaze aimlessly off into the sky at a far away plane. If they are uninterested in the activities, it may reflect a problem with the environment or the suitability of the coach. Kids come to soccer to be challenged, stimulated; learn how to become a player in the process of trial, error and discovery. A phenomenal aspect of "play" is that the problems, challenges disappointments or rewards also resemble and parallel life experiences. Learning for youngsters between the ages of 5 and 12 is a leisure activity that is accomplished through play. Remember...PLAY is a key part of PLAYER DEVELOPMENT!

Section 3- Keepers Corner

Welcome to the first edition of the Keepers Newsletter. This is being written to help goalkeepers learn more about the position and become better keepers.

Today's topic is very simple. It's a version of the 5 P Rule (for those of you who don't know what that is, it's Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance). In this case, it stands for Proper PRACTICE Prevents Poor Performance. I see so many keepers not concentrate during training sessions and maybe make a save but not worry about doing it right every time. To use another cliché, remember that practice does not make perfect but rather, practice makes permanent. Keepers who make lazy kick saves in training will make that same lame attempt in a game because that is what you are conditioning yourself to do. Any keepers who have trained with me know that I start every training session the same way with an emphasis on the fundamentals. Some have commented how boring this is but then they should look at it from my perspective: I have seen those same drills every training session I have run for 17 years plus the time I actually spent as a keeper. The only reason I don't change is that it WORKS! Constant repetition of correct fundamentals is the way to pursue perfection.

A couple of examples of what I am referring to are the basic warm-up. If while having a catch, the keeper doesn't concentrate on catching the ball properly, getting both hands on the ball at the same time, getting their body behind the ball, watching the ball into their hands and finally pulling the ball in every time then they will not do these very basic things when they are put under pressure. Another example of developing good (or bad) habits is the way keepers prepare to dive. I watch so many keepers do drills where they are sitting down and the coach/trainer/idiot throws the ball over the keepers head and the keeper rolls on her back and catches it and then throws it back. What exactly is accomplished by this drill besides encouraging the keeper to dive backwards onto her back (a definite no-no) Why not encourage the keeper to do things the correct way and serve the ball to the side and force the keeper to catch the ball while coming forward to meet the ball. Is there a big difference in these two drills? It's easy to say no until you realize one is encouraging bad technique and the other is working on the correct technique.

As a keeper, it sometimes it is important to realize that many of the drills you are involved in with the rest of the team are not designed for you. Because of this, many keepers don't take them too seriously since they aren't expected/able to save a large percentage of the shots. The common solution that I see keepers choose is to make a halfhearted effort for balls without regard for the tremendous damage they are doing to themselves (as well as to the team but that is an entirely different subject). This is when it's important to realize that you are developing habits all the time, why not make them good habits?

Section 3- Tactics

Today's edition is dealing with 1v1 play. The interesting part of this discussion is that I will be dealing with it from both the offensive and defensive side of things. The reason for this is quite simple. Most of soccer can be broken down into real small battles between one offensive player and one defensive player. Whichever team ends up winning the majority of these small battles usually ends up winning the entire match. There is no way to talk about 1v1 without talking about both sides so this will be the first subject of the Soccer Newsletter.

In dealing with this subject, I am going to make the assumption that the offensive player has a decent repertoire of moves. If you don't know many (any) moves, don't worry, as that will be an upcoming subject of the Soccer Newsletter.

I will start with the defensive stance of the first defender. Her knees should be bent, feet approximately 12-18 inches apart (width) and one foot in front of the other. All of the weight should be on the balls of the feet. This position should enable the defender to move in most direction at a quick pace as well as to change directions quickly. The first decision the defender must make is which direction she would like to push the attacking player. IN most cases, the defender would like to push the attacker away from her support and towards the defenders support. On the sides of the field, this frequently means pushing the player toward the sideline, which can be considered a second defender. If the attacker is coming down the middle of the field then a number of quick decisions have to be made. First of all, where are the supporting defenders? Secondly, where are the supporting attackers? Thirdly, which foot does the attacking player want to be using. Once all of these factors have been taken into consideration the decision of which side should the attacking player be pushed becomes much easier. Lets assume for the moment that the decision has been made to force the opponent down HER right side. This is best accomplished by the defender by placing the right foot in front of the left and 1-2 feet to the side of the attacking players left foot (assuming you are facing the attacking player in the proper stance and a few yards from the player. By standing to the side of the attacking player this way, she will feel she can beat you down her right side. If she tries to beat you down this side, YOU, THE DEFENDER, HAVE WON! You have made her react to your movements and this means you have won the first battle. Please understand that you must maintain a cushion from the attacking player since if you get caught up to close to her, she will blow past you since she is facing forward and you are essentially having to match her step for step going backwards.

Does this mean that anytime the attacker goes in the direction that the defender wants her to that the defender has won? NO! What it means is that long term if the defender gets the attacker to go in her direction she will usually win.

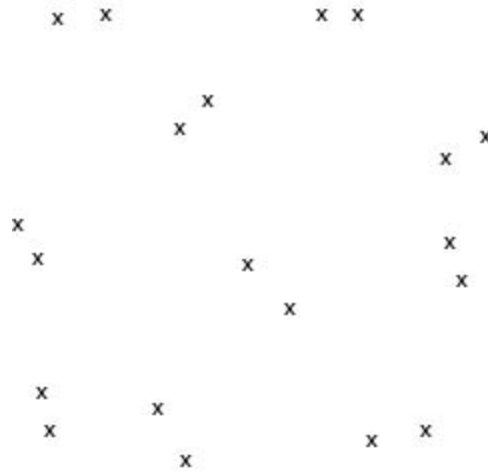
To combat this, a good offensive player will attack the defenders front foot. Using the example from above, this would mean the attacker dribbling at the defenders right (front) foot. By doing this, it will force the defender to do one of three things. If she stands her ground, the attacker will get close enough to her that she can blow by her real easily. That would be option 1. Option 2 is for the defender to shuffle backwards maintaining the same distance from the attacker. If this happens, the defender will eventually get pushed out of bounds since she will be going both backwards and toward the side in trying to push the attacker down her right side. The third option is for the defender to, at some point, perform a drop step and change the direction she is forcing the attacker. This is accomplished by having the defender switch from having her right foot in front to rotating the hips and stepping back with the right foot so that now the left foot is in front as well as being to the side of the attacking players right foot. Of the three options, this is the only one that doesn't involve complete surrender of the particular battle although if the defender does this, the attacker is certainly in control.

The best way for the defender to combat the opposition attacking her front foot is to utilize a proper feint. People spend a lot of time working on various moves and feints on offense, but it's equally as important on defense. As the attacker is driving at the defenders front foot, the defender can feint as if she is going to go in for a tackle. This will do one of two things. Either the attacker will put her head down and slow down, or she will lose possession of the ball. Either way, the defender has taken control back from the attacker. Note that at no point have I mentioned diving in and stabbing for the ball. In defense especially, patience is a virtue. If you are in control of the situation by forcing the opponent in the direction you want them to go and are controlling pace and vision through proper feinting, in time the attacking player will give you the ball. Be patient and good things will happen. Some of you might say that this is not true and they know such and such a person who never makes mistakes with the ball. My response to that is this is not true. I have had the privilege of working with a number of All Americans as well as a few national team players and they are just like everyone else. If you give them enough opportunities to make a mistake they will make one. The difference with most of them is that if you are not patient and let them dictate play, they will kill you. Remember that the best way to hurt an attacking player is to simply put her under pressure. In soccer, the two variables that affect pressure are time and space. If you can take away the attacking players time and space through proper positioning and feinting, she will feel pressure and this will force her to lose possession of the ball.

The next time you see two players going 1v1 against each other, see who is winning the individual battles most of the time. Chances are, whoever wins these battles will also win the match.

Section 3-Soccer Activities

The first thing to do is start with a warm up for this drill. Set a number of gates up throughout half of the field like below. Each gate should be 2 yards wide (a gate is simply two cones set up as things to go through such as a goal)



x's are cones

Have half the players wear white and the other half blue. Have a white and a blue player match up with each other with one ball per pair. This is simply a 1v1 game where the players try to score points by dribbling through as many gates as they can. The white player starts with the ball and tries to score as often as possible in the first one minute half. If the blue player wins the ball, then she tries to score goals. The only restriction is that the players can NOT dribble through the same goal two times in a row. After a one minute half, they rest (and stretch) for a minute, then play the second half with the blue player starting with the ball. With a team of 16 players, there will be 8 games of 1v1 going on at the same time. This will encourage the players to dribble with their heads up (or run into each other). The key is to turn this into a very competitive match. The next game should feature a white winner matching up with a blue winner and also have the losers match up with each other. You can do this three times and get a very strenuous work out going which will continue into the next drill.

The next progression of this series (which will begin to work with spacing and switching fields) is set up the exact same way with the gates remaining the same. It's essentially the same game with the major change being that there is only one ball for the whole team. Now it's all of the whites against all of the blues. In order to score a goal, the ball must be passed through a gate and received by a teammate. Those are the only rules that need to be explained. Start them off playing a 6 minute game with a 1 minute break at "halftime". This break is very important because typically, the first 3 minutes of this drill is dreadful. It has been my experience that players will try to dribble to a gate and then pass the ball through to a teammate who inevitably is marked up. During this one minute

break, explain to the players that it actually takes 3 players to score a goal and not just the two they are trying to use (the player with the ball and the target through the gate). The three players are the player with the ball, and then two other player who are working together to find an open gate. Once they find an open gate, the player with the ball can drive (or chip) the ball to one of these open players who then play it through the gate to the other one). Once they start to think in terms of needing three players to score a goal and that two of them must find an open (or unmarked) gate, then they will start to experience success in this game.

As the players get accustomed to this game, they will get more comfortable with playing with their heads up and looking to players who have proper support and spacing. This drill is a great way to prepare for the next drill that will continue to work on getting better spacing and the switching of fields in the attack

Section 3- Soccer Positions

This edition of the newsletter will explain the names and responsibilities of the various positions on a field.

Lets start from the back and work forward as is done when talking about a formation (when you hear 4-4-2 that means 1 goalkeeper which is implied, 4 backs, 4 midfielders and 2 forwards). The first position is the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper (also referred to as a keeper or goalie. The goalkeeper's primary responsibility is to keep the ball out of the goal from a defensive standpoint.

Next are the fullbacks (also known as backs or defenders). They have primarily defensive responsibilities. To break these players positions down a bit more specifically, there are marking backs (whose primary responsibility is to mark or guard a specific player to prevent them from scoring or creating scoring opportunities). There are also sweepers (whose primary responsibility is to provide support to the other defenders. Usually the sweeper will play behind the other backs and will help them whenever her help is needed). In front of a sweeper is a stopper who will either mark the center forward (if playing against three forwards) or the first center midfielder down field. When a team uses two marking backs, a sweeper and a stopper it's called a diamond defense because the two marking backs are frequently even with each other with the stopper in front of them and the sweeper behind them (making the shape of a diamond). Another version is to play a zone in back at which point you would have two outside backs and either one or two center backs. Instead of making the shape of a diamond, they tend to play a bit more in a straight line since they are more responsible for a particular area of the field rather than for a particular player. It should be understood that while I am writing from a defensive standpoint, these players can and should go forward to attack.

Next we have the midfielders (also known as halfbacks, mids and links). These players are responsible for both attacking and defending and basically keep the forwards and backs connected (hence the term link). There are frequently two outside midfielders who are responsible for creating space offensively and taking away space defensively.

Frequently, these players do more running and have a higher work rate than any other position.

Next we have the forwards (also known as strikers and target players). People consider their primary role to be to set up and score goals. The term striker is used because these players are expected to strike the ball to score goals. The reason for the term target player is that frequently these players are expected to establish a presence up front so that the backs and midfielders can play it up to them to get the ball into the attack. Usually, I will use the term target player for a big strong forward who will be able to receive the ball and either turn and strike the ball toward goal or she will be able to hold the ball to allow the other players to run off this target player. If a player is more geared toward making runs to receive the ball, I tend to use the term forward. If there are three frontrunners (yes, that is yet another term for this position), then frequently you will have a center midfielder and two wingers. The center forward frequently will be a target player while the wingers will stay much wider and try to create space to either dribble into, pass into or serve the ball from.

Please understand that these terms are very simplified descriptions of the positions responsibilities. Forwards, defend and backs attack. My simple purpose of writing this topic is to make it easier for people to understand what a coach means when he uses these different position names

Section 4- Articles

Heavier penalties for 'sports rage'

By DAVID LEVINSKY

Burlington County Times

New Jersey provides frustrated fans with strong incentives to keep their tempers under control at scholastic or youth sports events.

The Garden State does not treat so-called "sports rage" violators with kid gloves.

A 40-year-old Delran man found that out the hard way Saturday when he was charged with aggravated assault after he allegedly attacked his son's high school football coach during a game in Florence.

According to police, William Wald-man of Ohio State Drive was watching his son play in Delran's varsity football game against Florence when he suddenly jumped the fence that separates spectators from players, coaches and sidelines and threw Delran head coach Pete Miles to the ground and jumped on him.

Until two years ago, similar conduct would have qualified as a simple assault misdemeanor and would be tried in a local municipal court.

However, a bill signed by Gov. James E. McGreevey in August 2002 upgraded acts of simple assault by adults at youth sporting events to third- or fourth-degree aggravated assault felonies.

The maximum penalty for simple assault is six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Fourth-degree aggravated assault carries a maximum penalty of 18 months imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine.

At the same time, McGreevey also signed a law allowing school boards and sports leagues to create codes of conduct for parents, coaches and players addressing verbal and physical abuse. The law allows school boards and leagues to ban violators from games until they undergo anger management counseling.

Greg Heinzmann, director of the New Brunswick-based Rutgers Youth Sports Research Council, said New Jersey was one of the first states to pass legislation creating increased penalties for sports rage. He said other states have copied the laws.

"New Jersey was kind of the trailblazer involving legislation," Heinz-mann said.

No statistics are available concerning how many people have been charged under the revised aggravated assault standard, but Heinzmann said it should be a strong deterrent.

"It means a visit to Superior Court, which likely means the accused will have to hire a lawyer and could face jail and thousands of dollars in fines," Heinzmann said.

The Burlington County Prosecutor's Office will review the Florence case before presenting it to a grand jury for indictment, said Executive Assistant Prosecutor Jim Gerrow.

School administrators also will review the case before taking any actions to ban Waldman from games, said Delran Superintendent George Sharp.

"I met with Pete Miles this morning, but I have not had the opportunity to talk to the parent in question. I want to do that before any determination is made," Sharp said.

The attack on Miles was one of four high-profile incidents involving Burlington County youth or high school sports teams, leagues, fans or coaches during the last two years. The others were:

- In January 2002, the Riverfront Street Hockey League in Riverside disbanded due to threats of violence by parents against league officials.
- In February 2004, former Palmyra High School boys basketball coach Jack Davies and Board of Education member Robert K. Marinnie filed assault charges against each other following a post-game fight in the high school training room. The charges were dropped after they negotiated an undisclosed settlement.
- In March 2004, three students suffered minor injuries when a brawl erupted after a boys basketball playoff game between Lenape High School and Pennsauken High School in Atlantic City.

VIP: AYSO Program Empowers New Players

November 18, 2004

By MARIE-CLAUDE HAMEL, Palisadian-Post Contributor

From afar, nothing seems unusual. It's 9:30 on Saturday morning and the sports field at Calvary Christian school is swarming with young soccer players in blue and red jerseys. Coach Don Randolph, wearing a yellow T-shirt, runs with the players, giving them last-minute advice for the play.

"But as one gets closer to the field, something special differentiates this game from the average one: young soccer players, not donning any of the teams' colors, run up and down the field, assisting the team members with their moves. Those young aides, 'buddies,' are the key to the success of the American Youth Soccer Organization's VIP program for children with special needs.

"Each player is assigned a buddy from the moment he or she walks on the field to the time of walking off the field," Randolph said. The buddies are mostly friends and family members of the VIP players, volunteers from the local AYSO teams or from the local Boy Scout troop. 'If I have to give credit to anyone for the success of the program, it's to the buddies. These are young soccer players who have never experienced anything like this before,' he said.

"Although Randolph is an attorney with a full load of complex cases, he has already spent 10 years volunteering as a coach for AYSO. When he was asked to organize and coach the Pacific Palisades' VIP soccer program, which stands for Very Important Players, he said that both he and his wife Suzanne knew this was something they had wanted to do, it was just a matter of when. It now seems as though the fall of 2004 was just the right time for Don and Suzanne.

"Since the Randolphs' daughters, Christina, 16, and Maggie, 12, were already playing in AYSO teams, Don said they waited for their 10-year-old son Charlie to be ready to be involved in a sport before starting the Palisades' branch of the VIP program. Now Charlie, who is autistic, is able to participate in a team sport for the first time in his life, while being coached by his father. 'Charlie is staying a little longer every week. Perhaps he'll stay for a whole game by the end of the season,' Don said.

"Charlie is part of the 10-year-old and under co-ed group, which now has about 12 registered players, while the over-10 group has about six players. The younger group takes to the field from 8:30 to 10 a.m. Saturdays, while the older group plays between 10 and 11:30 a.m. on the same days.

"But the VIP program is still a work in progress. Having officially started only in late September, Don said he felt the program could grow rapidly. 'We now have about 18 to 20 players registered and we're very pleased, but I would be very happy if we could grow the program to about 50 players.' In addition to Don, Chris Jones helps coach the team and also has a son, Dylan, who plays in the older group. Volunteer Nancy Weintraub also helps with coaching, and her son Ted is one of the buddies.

"According to Debbie Held, the commissioner for AYSO Region 69, which encompasses Brentwood, the Palisades and adjacent neighborhoods, the VIP program was greatly needed in the Palisades and she was pleased when Don accepted her offer to start the project. 'It takes a lot of energy to get



Coach Don Randolph instructs his players to keep both feet on the ground during throw ins. From left are Sam Masius, 12, "buddies" Ted Forscher and Kerry Virgien, Max Masius, 15 (practicing his throw-in technique), David Coles and Mike Roux. Photo by Margaret Molloy

the ball rolling, and Don has been a great organizer and a great coach,' she said. 'There is a need for this program in this community and I think it's great time that we have a VIP project in place. It's now just a matter of getting the word out to the community and letting them know that this is available to their children.'

"The VIP project has its arms open to many children who would otherwise be unable to participate in a team sport. 'Anyone with any disability that doesn't make a child too fragile to play is welcome,' said Suzanne Randolph. Although the program is open to any child with physical or mental impairment, Suzanne said that the majority of the Palisades' VIP members have autism. According to AYSO, these children can often feel isolated in schools and in special programs, but the integration of the non-disabled players to the VIP program allows for a healthier growth and exchange for the children with special needs.

"Mike Roux, a 16-year-old who, on the Saturday we visited, was sporting a blue jersey and scored the first goal for his team, has found in VIP the outlet he needed in order to satisfy his desire to play sports. His father Chris, who also fills in as a temporary coach, explained that since socialization is the main difficulty for autistic children, the idea of a team sport helps lift some of the barriers. 'Kids like Mike think about themselves all the time, so the concept of a team broadens his world,' Chris said. 'He really does enjoy it. He played for three years in the Westchester VIP program, but this is closer to home.'

"But some of the children are newer to the scene. One of Mike's friends, 15-year-old David Coles, is one of them. Having gone for the first time to a VIP soccer game two weeks before, he sat on the sidelines until halftime, when he finally decided to join in and, according to Don, quickly became the star of the show. 'He's a natural,' Don said.

"But David's mother Laurie said she thinks that his agility may come from someplace else. 'He plays computer games constantly. We think that's why he's so quick to learn,' she said. Laurie said that David loves to write and has a great imagination. 'I think he lives his life through the stories that he writes and I think that's him trying to have friends: the ones who live in his stories. That's why I think [VIP] is very important. It's part of their socialization.'

"David, who, like Mike, wore a blue jersey, scored at least two goals during Saturday's game, making him once more very popular with his team and with the group of parents who sit on the sidelines and encourage all players.

"At the end of each game, the players give each other cheers and run through a tunnel made by their family members and the volunteers. It is difficult not to notice the joy on the children's faces as they pass under their loved ones' arms.

"Although this volunteer, parent-run national group has for its obvious goal to benefit children with special needs, Don said he feels that the buddies also go home with a great gift. His daughter Christina has been a buddy for the whole season and she said that, in many ways, the experience has touched her life. 'I've worked in my little brother Charlie's classroom before. I was a volunteer and there was a lot of one-on-one work. But school is tough for everybody. With soccer, the kids are having more fun and their faces light up. It's wonderful to see that.'

There are some difficulties for the buddies as well. Christina said that she often works with the more disabled children since she has that experience with her brother Charlie at home. But for the most part, she said that all that is required is that one knows the basic rules of soccer and has some coordination. 'It's not heavy duty. For anybody who likes kids, it's great and it's really fun,' she said. 'And it's not hard to come up once a week and brighten up your whole day in the process.'

"Don also said he believes in the advantages that youngsters get from being involved in the program. 'It gives the buddies a greater appreciation of the world, of the life and of the spirit of these kids. Anytime a child with special needs gets to participate in a program like this, everybody benefits.'

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GROWTH PLATE INJURIES

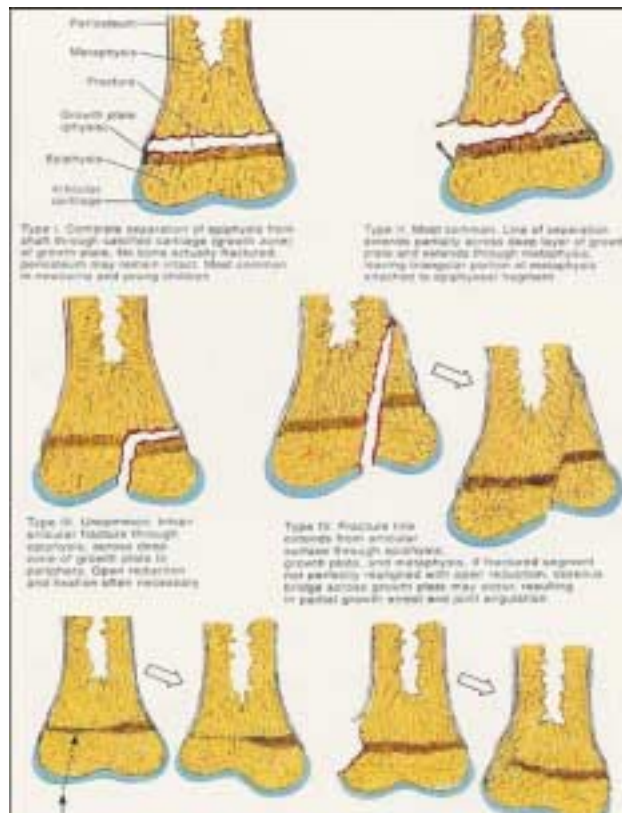
The growth plate is an area of bone that contains specialized cells that are growing in number, which help to add thickness and length to that bone. As the cells grow in number and move farther away from the growth plate area, they undergo changes and begin to retain calcium, which helps transform them into mature bone.

Any injury to the growth plate must be evaluated on a timely basis and treated properly in order to minimize long-term problems, such as limb-length discrepancies, improper interface of the bones at joint surfaces which may lead to premature arthritis, and angular deformities of an extremity.

The growth plate is held together by tough fibrous tissue(similar in consistency to ligaments, but not quite as strong). This fibrous tissue acts as the 'glue' which holds the plate together. This area is the "weak link" in the overall structure of the growing bone.

A thorough history of the injury to determine the mechanism which caused it is necessary, combined with a comprehensive exam which will include x-rays and often special studies such as CT scans or MRI to obtain a full appreciation of the injury and develop an appropriate treatment plan.

There are 6 different patterns of injury commonly associated with growth plate injuries:



Often, a traction(pulling) force on the growth plate will be so great that a small separation between the ends of the growing bones will occur. A prime example is a twisting injury to the ankle in a child or adolescent, where ligaments will remain intact or stretch slightly but not tear. They then pull on their attachment to bones near the growth plate. A loss of stability at the growth plate occurs due to a stretching of the fibers holding the ends of the bones together. There is usually point tenderness in this area and the area of tenderness has a high correlation to the area of the growth plate when compared to x rays. Subtle increases in the space at the growth plate are appreciated, but aren't always observed.

When a traction injury occurs, immobilization and non weight bearing are necessary to allow the fibrous tissue to regain strength, and minimize chances of any displacement or malalignment of the growing bone ends. This is achieved with placing the injured part in a fiberglass cast and use of crutches for at least 2 weeks. During the course of healing, a transition into a fiberglass walking cast, then a removable walking cast boot will take place. Physical therapy is incorporated at the removable cast boot stage to restore muscle strength and range of motion of body joints that are in close proximity to the fracture.

If a fracture line occurs through the solid bone and travels across the growth plate, anatomic reduction, alignment, & stabilization is required. CT scans or MRI can aid in determining the extent of a fracture & malalignment. Surgery may be necessary to align fractures and provide fixation of the injured area. After surgery, a course of immobilization and non-weightbearing, followed by a transition to immobilization and weight-bearing and then to removable cast boot and physical therapy will take place.

Prompt evaluation and treatment of your child can help to ensure that long-term detrimental effects are minimized.