Pelham Soccer Club



Coaches Manual





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Introduction

If you are reading this manual, you have probably signed up to coach a soccer team with Pelham Soccer Club. First, we thank you for your willingness to help out, and we hope that you enjoy the experience of coaching as much as the kids enjoy playing.

How to use this manual

This manual was assembled to help all PSCI coaches regardless of their experience. Novice coaches can use the practice plans and drill diagrams to help prepare for practice each week. Experienced coaches can use the skill target guidelines to focus their plans to help each player develop the skills needed to play soccer well.

Philosophy

The philosophy of PSCI is simple: if young players first learn to love playing soccer, they will want to play it well.

With that in mind, we want our coaches to stress fun and fundamentals. Players should love coming to practice and leave excited about what they've learned. Hopefully, this manual will provide you with ideas and

Success is not based on standings or game statistics but on the enthusiasm of the players and, ultimately, the number of players who come back the next year.

practice games that will be fun for the kids while at the same time develop the essential skills they need to feel good about themselves as players. It will also establish skill targets for each age category so you can determine how well your players are doing.

In general, though, Pelham coaches are charged with allowing each player to discover and explore his or her soccer identity. Is he a goal scoring striker? Is she a playmaking winger? Maybe a solid two-way midfielder or a steady defender? Second, coaches should encourage players to be creative, to take chances and to not be afraid to make mistakes. Encourage all your players to take on defenders one on one, to go to goal looking to score and to make

decisions on the field. Be active players, not passive. Be aggressive, not defensive. Most of all, encourage your players to use the skills they are developing in practice during the game.

Finally, remember that at the Timbit, Pre-Squirt, Squirt and older house league level, the final score and end of season record is well down the list of priorities. The emphasis here is on fun and skill development. Success is not based on standings or game statistics but on the enthusiasm of the players and, ultimately, the number of players who come back the next year.

These priorities are endorsed by Canada's national soccer program as outlined in the coaching portion of Soccer Canada's website:

A Coach's Creed

The Primary responsibility of a youth soccer coach is to help the young player to have fun, learn and improve. This responsibility makes a youth coach different from any other official in the club, league or association. We (coaches) coach for the joy and success of the players and no other reason.

Role of the Coach

"A coach should help to improve the performance of the players (and the team) both physically and psychologically. The position of coach is demanding and multi-faceted. Parent, teacher, counselor, disciplinarian, organizer...these are some of the duties demanded of the coach. When players sign-up with a club, they expect to receive something for their registration fee. They want to play and learn and they also want to do so in an enjoyable environment...As coaches, we must try to find out what potential a player has so that we can develop that potential and make the player the best player he or she can be."

With those grand objectives, PSCI has provided this set of skill development ideas to help all of our coaches achieve success.



Skill Priorities

For many coaches, especially those new to the game of soccer, the game can be a blur of skills and demands. It is difficult, at times, to know just what the players should be learning or what they should already know at any given stage. To help, this manual has set out a series of basic skill development priorities — things every player should be able to do by the time they are eight or nine years old. These foundation abilities ensure that the player's skills are well rooted in the fundamentals, enabling them to grow and blossom to the extent that their own personal interest and dedication will allow.

Dribbling:

Fundamental to early soccer development is basic ball skill. Coaches should dedicate time every practice to improving this area, starting with warm up exercises. If you want to have your players run, make them take a ball with them. Encourage

them to keep their heads up. Provide opportunities for them to dribble in a variety of situations — in open field, in crowds,

These foundation abilities ensure that the player's skills are well rooted in the fundamentals

in 1v1 situations — and at a variety of speeds. Have them change direction and use different parts of their feet. A single dribbling exercise can be adapted and refreshed simply by challenging the player to use a different style of dribbling.

Use of both feet:

The primary reason many players never develop the ability to use the left foot is because they are never asked to do so. Players as young as four or five should be encouraged to use their left foot in all shooting, dribbling and passing exercises. At that age, while they may prefer the right side, they have not developed the true dominance that can lead to exclusivity. It is much easier for them to develop their left side from the beginning than it is to build it up once the dominance is established. This can be accomplished simply by requiring the players to work on their weak side. If the drill calls for the player to dribble across the field, have them dribble back using only their left foot.

Mental Game:

The difference between an average player and a good player is skill. The difference between a good player and an exceptional player is the ability to think on the field. This is a skill that can be developed, just like passing or shooting. Encourage players to make decisions and act on them. Have them ask the questions, "What do I do if the ball comes to me?", and "What is happening and what should I be doing?". Do not be afraid to freeze scrimmages or small-sided games

to offer instruction on what the players should be doing or where they should be going.

Fitness:

Much has been said and written about the activity level of young people in our society, too much in fact to go into here. However, it is important to note that soccer players are among the most well-conditioned athletes around. It is not necessary to send your players to run laps of the field unless you are using the time to set up the next drill. Even then, have them take a ball with them and dribble while they run. For the purposes of your practices, fitness should be an integral part of every activity. When running a drill involving lines, keep those lines short so players are involved in the play more often. Frequent water breaks are important, but keep them short and get the kids back into the exercises as quickly as possible. In short, make conditioning an integral part of every exercise for the full 60 minutes of your practice, not an isolated (and dull) 10 or 15 minute block.

Competition

It is virtually impossible to completely eliminate the competitive aspect from minor sports. In any situation where a score is kept, there will be a competitive element. However, it is important to realize that young players come to your team for a variety of reasons, but most commonly it is to have fun. That's why many young players enjoy playing with their friends, relatives, neighbours and classmates. Some children thrive in competitive situations and, in fact, need that to maintain interest. Others will shrink from intense competition. You will have both on your team and it is important to balance both.

As a general guideline, however, remember that you are coaching children, not professionals. Fun and fair competition is the over-arching goal. The final result in any one game is never as important as the health and wellbeing of the players. Winning at the expense of a player's self-confidence is no victory. What does that mean in a practical sense?

Balanced Playing Time:

To the best of their abilities, every coach must endeavor to share playing time equally between players. While it is virtually impossible to do so, playing the "best" player for the entire game and rotating other players around him or her is unacceptable. The goal of PSCI is the development of all players to their maximum potential, not the production of a handful of great players. A critical element to that development is playing time. A weak player will not improve if you bolt them to the bench. They improve by playing and taking on roles within the team.

Fair Competition:

This means, when possible, coaches and officials will ensure the competitive balance of the teams is maintained. Teams should always play with an equal number of players on the field even if that means playing with fewer players than the division allows. In lopsided games, the winning team should use the opportunity to develop other aspects. This doesn't mean the winning team should stop trying or good players should be relegated to the bench. Instead, require your players to pass the ball a certain number of times before taking a shot, or have them make a pass back to the defense before starting a new rush, or only allow shots generated off a cross, or quietly assign the team to set up a particular player for a goal. Whatever the case, challenge your players to work on skills. Blowouts can teach players more than the fact that after scoring six goals, they can score a seventh, eighth and ninth.

Have Fun:

Remember, if you are having fun your players will probably have fun, too. Laugh. Joke with your players. Play with them at practice. Try to incorporate fun games into every practice. Sing "Happy Birthday" to any player celebrating a birthday during the week. Cheer when a player scores.

Praise Effort:

Do not reserve your congratulations for the best players. Take time to celebrate the player whose effort is consistently high even if their successes are not. Reserve some high-fives for the player whose pass set up the goal, or whose tackle prevented a scoring chance. Also, support any player's attempt to beat a defender one on one with skill even if the attempt is unsuccessful.

Respect:

Fundamental to creating a healthy, enjoyable atmosphere is respect for everyone associated with the game — teammates, opponents, coaches and officials. It is essential, however, that you as a coach model this. Verbal abuse of referees, players or other coaches is unacceptable in any situation and can drive some players away from the game even if they are not the target of the abuse. In particular, how you treat referees is of utmost importance. Remember that most of the refs at the house league level are only a few years older than the players, and many of them are rookies. They are learning. Treat them with understanding and respect. Help them learn and improve; don't drive them out of the job by treating them badly. Abuse from parents and coaches is the main reason given by young refs to explain why they hang up the whistle.

The Best and Worst

Every coach has them. No matter what group of players

you get, you are likely to find one or two will be head and shoulders better than all of the others and one or two will make you wonder why they show up at all. The fact is, both type of players deserve special attention.



It is the nature of any coach to lean on the talents of the best player and there is nothing wrong with that. Every coach wants a player who can be counted upon to score two, three or four goals a game. However, the caution here is make sure that player is developing as a soccer player and is not getting by simply thanks to superior athletic ability. Take time in practice to break down your star's skills. Can he or she dribble with the head up? Is he or she kicking the ball with the sweet spot on the foot? How often does he or she use the opposite foot? These areas are critical to the eventual development of the player. A lot of talent has died on the vine because of complacency. If you discover a weakness, you owe it to the player to correct the mistake, which might meet with some resistance from both the player and the parent. But stick to your guns; demand that the player use proper technique and correct skills during games.

If all of those things seem to be in order, don't be afraid to challenge your player with a goal for each game. It could

Insist that they use their skills consistently either to succeed themselves or to help teammates succeed

be a minimum number of goals, but it would be better to concentrate on a specific aspect of the game. Ask the player to take on a

beat at least one defender each time he or she has the ball. Show them a "trick" move and have them pull it off at least once per game. Tell them to avoid scoring until they've helped set up a goal for another player, preferably one at the bottom end of the roster. This experience will force the player to think about how they play the game and will keep the experience interesting because, believe it or not, scoring can become quite boring.

Most importantly, though, insist on a consistency of effort. Great players can get lazy, allowing their superior athletic ability to shine when they want it to, then doing nothing for long stretches of time. They can also develop practice bad habits, believing their success means they don't need to practice. Either of these can be deadly to a good player's future in the game because they will become bored from lack of development or quit when they encounter and cannot handle superior competition. Insist that these players

perform skills properly in practice and in games. Insist that they use their skills consistently either to succeed themselves or to help teammates succeed.

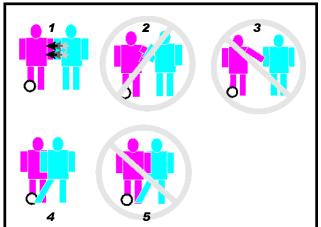
But what about the player at the other end of the spectrum? For many coaches, the relationship falls into one of two styles. They either ignore the player completely or tear their hair out trying to turn them into the next David Beckham. Neither is a particularly effective or gratifying approach. Instead, understand that players come to your team from a variety of different places and are at different stages in their development, both as players and as people. Start small. Is there anything that they do well? Are they fast? Can they kick the ball hard? Can they dribble? If so, you can help them define who they are as players. Put them in positions that will allow them to use the quality they have. Put speed out on the wings. Put hard kickers back on defense. Good dribblers can play forward. Give them the chance to be successful.

There are, however, players who don't do anything particularly well. If your weak link falls into this category, start with the basics. Take 10 minutes each practice to work one on one with the player to work on dribbling, passing and shooting. You may never produce a star, but you will make a young person feel important and valued and that alone may improve their performance — they'll be playing for you! In games, put these players into situations where they can succeed and give them a single assignment. Get them to shadow the other team's best player and encourage them when they do it. Put them on the wing and tell them that when they get the ball they are to drive it into the 18 yard box for the forwards. Put them on the forward line and tell them to go to the front of net and try to score. Simple assignments performed well build confidence in the player and enjoyment of the game.

A Word About Physical Play

Soccer is a physical game. Players are allowed to make hard contact with others as long as that contact is shoulder to shoulder. Also, players are allowed to shield the ball; that is, set their bodies between the ball and the defender and use their outside arm and shoulder to hold off the pressure as long as their foot is in contact with the ball. Conversely, the defender is allowed to pressure the ball carrier by leaning on him (or her). What is not allowed is any use of the elbow or hand. There can be no pushing or shoving. Tackling is an important defensive skill. The purpose is to separate the ball from the dribbler, not the other way around. The tackler must target the ball and only the ball. Targeting the player as a defender might in hockey is against the rules.

The most common adjustment most players have when moving from house league to select, or when playing against other house league teams from larger soccer centres, is the degree of physical play. That said, introducing physical play at a young age is a tricky business. At no point should physical play be a substitute for proper skill development. A big, physical player with no skill is not a soccer player and allowing such a player to thrive can drive other kids out of the sport entirely. If you find yourself with such a player, it is your job to demand from them the use of skill over brawn. Make them work on dribbling properly, shooting correctly and keeping their head up at all times. Demand that, in game situations, the player use skill and brains to succeed, then reinforce that with praise even if the attempt is unsuccessful. A big, skilled player is much more valuable on the soccer field than one that is big and unskilled. And,



Clean, legal physical play involves shoulder-to-shoulder contact (Fig. 1) but should never involve the elbow (Fig. 2). The arm must be straight down and not be used to push away the opponent (Fig. 3). When tackling from the side, the tackler must play the ball from beside or slightly ahead of the dribbler (Fig.4). A tackle from behind (Fig. 5) will almost always result in a foul.

while they may not believe it at first, the player will enjoy the game a lot more.

Another common tactic is the slide tackle. They are legal if done properly but most young players do not know how to execute the move correctly. The slide must target the ball only and must be from the side only. A slide tackle from the back or front of a dribbler is foul and could draw a yellow card. In addition, it is rarely an effective method of defense and should be discouraged except in rare cases. When a player slides he or she have effectively taken themselves out of the play.

If they bring down the dribbler, they have likely surrendered a free kick. If they do connect with the ball they have likely pushed it closer to the goal and, unless another defender is available, actually improved the scoring chance. Explain to the player that if you are close enough to slide, you are close enough to overtake the attacker by running and administer a legal tackle that leaves you available for the next play.

Other Resources:

This manual is intended to be only a starting point. There are literally dozens of other books, manuals, videos, training courses and websites available to help you help your players. For volunteer coaches, the easiest and quickest of these resources is the online variety, so we have provided a short list of sites that might help you.

http://eteamz.active.com/soccer/instruction/tips/

The eteamz site is an excellent resource for simple, well explained drills and games. The drills are divided into skill areas including shooting, passing, dribbling, control, and team tactics. Many drills are provided by Jeff Pill but others are contributed by regular site visitors.

http://www.eteamz.com/soccer/pills/jpill.htm

Jeff Pill is member of the United States National Women's Team coaching staff and a regular contributor to the eteamz site. The drills are broken down into skill areas including defending, goalkeeping and basic skills

http://www.finesoccer.com/

Lawrence Fine is the author of The FineSoccer Way Of Coaching 9-12 Year Olds. The site includes an archive of hundreds of soccer drills, all with diagrams outlining how the exercise is to be performed. You can also sign up for a series of newsletters on everything from coaching goaltending to kids drills.

http://www.expertfootball.com/coaching/drills.php

A reasonable collection of drills with diagrams.

http://www.canadasoccer.com/eng/coaching/

The official website of Soccer Canada and the Canadian Soccer Association includes a good section for youth coaches. As well as information on the National Coaching Certification Program, there are practice plans and skill development games designed to help novice and experienced coaches. There is also a section of player tips from some of Canada's best international players.

http://www.joesoccer.com/info/games.html

This site contains a collection of youth games broken down into skill categories. Each drill has a cool animation indicating how the game is to be played. The drills are contributed by former U.S. national team player Gregg Thompson.

 $http://www.soccerhelp.com/Soccer_Drills.shtml$

Another collection of good, fun drills.

http://www.nscaa.com/coachingtips/tips/index_E.html

This is the official site of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. It contains a regularly updated list of articles. While there are no drills, the discussion about skill development are very insightful and easy to read. A good resource.

http://www.worldclasscoaching.com/samples.asp

The official site of the World Class Coaching publishing company, this features a series of training sessions saved in PDF files. They are all downloadable but require Adobe Acrobat to read. Each of the sessions are from international or top-ranked club teams including Manchester United, Ajax and Boca Juniors. Don't be intimidated, though; the sessions are easy to understand and stress basic skills. You can also sign up for a regular newsletter that includes a game sample along with several pages of promotional material for coaching DVDs, books, courses and other merchandise.

Drills & Skills — Timbit

At this early age, your players are not on the field because they have chosen to play soccer. Instead, they are there because their parents chose soccer as a summer activity over a host of others (or maybe in addition to others). With that in mind, it is essential that the players have fun. They will likely to go away talking about the quality of the half-time snack instead of the score of the game.

Skill Targets

Fun

Introduction to dribbling

Use of both feet

That doesn't mean, however, that coaches should abandon skill development. Instead, skill development activities must be fun, active and non-competitive. If possible, every activity should have the player with a ball at his or her feet including warm ups, running and even water breaks.

Drills

Bells

Players stand over the ball and pass it back and forth between their feet. Encourage them to "ring the bell" faster and faster. To get them to keep their heads up, play a game where they have to tell you how many figures you're holding up.

Toe Taps

Players start with their right foot on top of the ball and, on Go, switch to the left foot on top of the ball. The players alternate left and right, back and forth as quickly as possible

Push Forward

Players start by pushing the ball forward with the laces of their shoes. Get them to use a Step-Touch-Step-Touch cadence. This is the basic dribbling technique. It is NOT kick-and-chase. This is moving the ball forward under control.

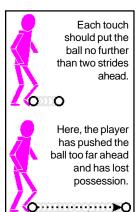
Pull Back

Players use the sole of their foot to pull the back back, then step back and pull the ball back again.

Sweep Across

Players again use the sole of their foot to pull the ball sideways. The key here is to pass the back foot completely across the top of the ball to drag the it along. This is difficult for young players but is a good introduction to moving the

ball in a direction other than straight forward.



Touch, Step, Touch, Step, Stop

Line the players up and have them dribble out across their field using a specific stride. On the first TOUCH, the player pushes the ball forward with the laces of his or her shoe. On STEP, the player strides after the ball. On the second TOUCH, the player pushes the ball forward again. On the second STEP, the player strides after the ball again. On STOP, the player stops the ball from moving by putting his or her foot on top of the ball. This cadence can be repeated over and over again. As the players get better at it, encourage them to increase the speed or the number of touch-step sequences before the stop.

Simon Says

Just like the preschool game, the coach gives instructions: "Simon says, Push Forward!"; "Simon Says, do Toe Taps!". Mix up the previous skills into one fun and active game that asks the players to execute certain skills on command.

Follow the Leader

Just like the preschool game, except the leader has a ball and all of the players behind must follow in a row dribbling. If the leader turns right, the line turns right. If the leader goes left, so does the line. If the player stops the ball, so must the line. Encourage the players to keep their heads up in line so they don't bump into the player in front of them.

Red Light, Green Light

Again, a variation on an old favourite. The players dribble forward on "Green Light" and stop on "Red Light"

Dribble and Drop

Players dribble across the field and, on the whistle, drop the ball and sprint to the line, turn and run back to pick up their ball and dribble to the starting point.

Dribble, Drop and Switch

Same as the Dribble and Drop, but the players must pick up another player's ball.

Shuttle Dribble

Dribble the ball in a straight line. On the whistle, the players step on the ball to stop it, turn and dribble back in the other direction. This continues over and over. Slowly reduce the time between whistles.

Cuts

Set a series of cones in a zigzag pattern. In turn, players

dribble through the cones, cutting the ball sharply at each cone and heading back toward the next cone. Start the drill with the cuts at something less than 90 degrees and slowly tighten the angle by moving the cones until it is at 45 degrees. As a progression, have the players use the outside of the foot to cut the ball. Another variation is to have the players switch feet at the cut. In other words, they dribble the first line and cut the ball with the right foot, then dribble

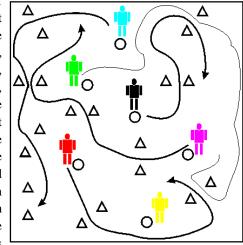
to the second cone and cut the ball with the left foot, and so on. A third variation adds a second touch on the cut and might require practicing the cut alone over and over prior to the drill. The twotouch cut offers more control and involves using the inside of the right foot to cut the ball across

the front of the player, then using the outside of the left foot to push the ball on. This allows the player to maintain contact with the ball and control of the plays.

Gates

Create a square area using cones. Inside that area, set up

a series of gates about $1 \, \mathrm{m}$ wide using cones, pinnies, flower pots, The etc. players must dribble the ball inside the area and through each gate. Each time he or she dribbles



through a gate, the player gets one point. After a minute or so, change the rules. At each gate, the player must perform some sort of skill or activity. Have them stop the ball with the sole of their foot then start again. Then have them stop the ball and hop over it (like bunny rabbits). Then have them stop the ball and sit on it. The key in each case is they must start dribbling again.

Woodpecker

Also known as "Shark", this game encourages dribbling in a non-linear pattern. Create a square area on the field using cones. All but one player has a ball. The player without the ball is the woodpecker (or shark) and is assigned to kick away the other players' balls. The other players must dribble inside the square and avoid the woodpecker. If their ball gets kicked away, they simply retrieve it, return to the square and keep dribbling. After one minute, change the

woodpecker.

Bulldog

Line the players up on one side of the field. Appoint one player as the bulldog. On Go, the players must dribble across the field and avoid the bulldog. The bulldog's job is to kick the ball away from as many players as possible. Any player who loses his or her ball, becomes a bulldog. The game continues until only one dribbler remains. Play again, but

The emphasis should always be on proper technique and providing equal time for both feet

Musical Dribbling

Players dribble in a

this time the winner

starts as the bulldog.

confined area. On the whistle, everyone must drop their ball and find a new one. After a few turns, remove one of the balls. Now, on the drop, one player will be left without a ball. Remove one ball with each successive turn

Dribble through cones

Place lines of cones or other markers out from the sidelines and place a row of players behind each. Try to keep the lines short to reduce the amount of standing. One by one, the player dribble the ball out and weave through the row of cones, turning at the end and weaving back. At the end, the player passes the ball to the next player in line, who follows the same route. This can be done either as a race or not, depending on the nature of your group. To make the game a little more complicated, simple move every second cone a little to one side, creating a zig-zag pattern.

Nutmeg

Divide your team in half. One group has a soccer ball apiece. The second group stands in 30m x 30m square. The key is they must have their feet as far apart as possible to create a gate. On go, the first group dribbles through the area. As they approach members of their second group, they must pass the ball through the gate and collect it on the other side. Game goes on for one minute, then switch groups.

This collection of dribbling drills can be adapted to suit your particular needs, or used as presented here. Elements of each can be combined or adjusted to increase the degree of difficulty for older or more advanced players. The key is to mix them up to prevent practice from becoming boring and predictable. The emphasis, however, should always be on proper technique — pushing the ball rather than kicking it, changing directions, heads up — and providing equal time for both feet.

The Line Change Sheet

One of the most difficult jobs a coach has is managing the bench during a game. Ensuring every player gets an equal opportunity to play is a laudable goal, but it can drive you to distraction. Worst of all, if you fail in achieving equitable playing time, you are most likely going to find out about it the hard way. In the excitement of the game, it is easy to forget who's been on the whole game, who just came off, and who really needs to go on. Especially early in the season when your team is a jumble of names, numbers and faces, mistakes happen.

There is no sure-fire way to eliminate mistakes, and as discussed earlier in this manual, equal play is a virtual impossibility in a single game. However, using a line change form like the one illustrated below is a good way to track your substitute rotations during a particular game and, if kept on file, over a season.

This form is just one idea, and a full-size version is included here for you to photocopy if you wish. It can be adapted for your needs or used as a model to create something more appropriate to your personal style. In summary, this tool allows you to list your whole roster on one side, set your starting line up, track your substitutes and determine who's due to come off. Using arrows, you

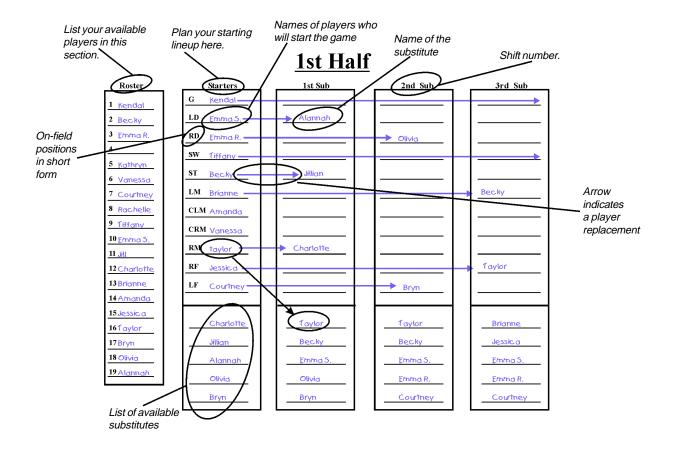
can determine at a glance if one player has been on too long, or is playing their proper position on the field. This reduces the chance that one player will see action for the entire game,

another will rot on the bench because they are too timid to speak up.

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It will also give you a quick reference to see who started the game before and who came off the bench. This way you can ensure every player gets the experience of starting a game and of joining the play mid-way through the half.

Using a system will cut down on accidental inequities, and give you a reference point should a parent complain. What it will not do, however, is protect you from intentional benching. Those will become glaringly obvious and will be up to you to explain.



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2	LD	LD	LD	LD	© August
3	RD	RD	RD	RD	
5	sw	SW	sw	SW	
6	ST	ST	ST	ST	
7	LM	LM	LM	LM	
8	CLM	CLM	CLM	CLM	
9	CRM	CRM	CRM	CRM	
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