

The Spartans FC Youth Section

Guidelines for Soccer 7's – Coaches/Parent

Update Jan 2018

The Spartans FC Youth Section has three key objectives:

- 1. Providing Opportunities for Children & Young People to play in a fun and safe environment**
- 2. Development of Players to play football at the highest level**
- 3. Helping children and young people learn life skills and values for later life**

While Spartans is a football club, the opportunities and responsibilities for coaches are far broader. Coaches are the role models for children and parents and have a responsibility to project and promote agreed core values. From simple things like coaches always wearing the appropriate Spartans kit through to how a coach communicates with his/her peers, players, parents, opponents and officials. A coach is a leader and his/her actions and behaviour are reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of all those he/she comes into contact with. This is especially important to consider with children and young people.

Coaches are responsible for the establishment of standards within their squad and throughout the club:

- Training is organised and starts on time
- Coaches respect other coaches and communicate openly
- Coaching is a group activity and not a dictatorship
- Players and parents are treated respectfully
- Always encourage players and push them to improve
- Standards of behaviour are communicated and respected
- Youth players all develop at different rates - the key is the player's application

Spartans has an opportunity to set standards in youth football and these standards are established and promoted by the coaches of the teams.

While it's important to be competitive in Youth Football the setting of standards and the building of core values within a team and within individuals is vital.

Off the pitch standards lead to on the pitch success.

Managing the expectations of both players and parents is an integral part of being a coach. Establishing expectations at the beginning of the season (goal setting for squad and players) and being honest about these will mean less opportunity for dis-satisfied players and parents.

What is the Big Picture?

There is a Long-Term Player Development plan (LTPD) in place which is not result focused.

- Soccer 7's is non-competitive developmental football.

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- The Scottish Youth FA and East of Scotland Soccer Association (ESSDA) recognise that playing football in groups of similar ability is the way forward both for children's development and enjoyment.
- An age group is successful when all players enjoy playing the game at the level appropriate to the best they can achieve.
- Winning is important but not everything.
- Learning to be positive with Ball Mastery and passing the ball from the Goalkeeper is key.

Transition from 5 a-side to Soccer 7's

This is a fun time for players, coaches and parents. Bigger pitch, full match strips, a size four ball and most importantly bigger goals to score in.

Spartans FC Youth as a club carefully follow the SFA Player pathway so avoid playing Soccer 7's early and do not start Soccer 7's until official fixtures are given. Practice matches can be played internally only within the club and the older age group.

Officials and Administration of 7 aside squads

Head Coaches/Secretary will:

- Register teams and players
- Organise strips, balls and fixtures
- Coordinate training sessions with other coaches
- Hold coach meetings at least three times a year to ensure communication between all squad coaches
- Enable discussions between coaches regarding player development, player/squad groupings and movement between squads
- Hold meetings with parents to enable communication, setting of expectations and gain parental buy-in/support
- Maintain a full list of the coaching and volunteer team (e.g. name, address, PVG, etc)
- Attend regular sessions with CDO

Head Coach Coaching Qualifications:

- SFA Level 1.3 or higher

Assistant Coaches Coaching Qualifications:

- At least one assistant coach per squad must be SFA level 1.2 as every 7 aside squad has to have a level 1.3 and level 1.2 coach on the SYFA database (SYFA rules)

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All coaches must be committed to:

- Acting as a role model for players
- Continued personal development through SFA coaching pathway
- Coaching the Spartans Way to ensure long term player development
- Obtain the relevant Spartans and SYFA PVG to allow registration of official on SYFA database
- Rotate players into different positions to enable greater learning
- Attend Positive Scotland workshops (attend once every 2 seasons)
- Attend Spartans FC Youth In-Service nights (Every 3/4 Months)
- Make reference to the Spartans Coaches Code of Conduct to guide behaviour

Parent Helpers / Volunteers will: (Not SFA Qualified so not recognised as Coach)

- Obtain the relevant Spartans and SYFA PVG to allow registration of official on SYFA database (Secretary, first aider and child protection officer)
- Support coaches deliver session plans under supervision
- Ensure players attendance is recorded
- When available Positive Coaching Hand-out Cards to be handed out to parents/spectators on Sunday mornings

Other roles are:

- 1) **Secretary** – registers the team, officials and players. Keep an up to date record of contact details. Act as liaison between club and team official, players and parents.
- 2) **Kit Manager** – organise sizing and ordering of kit and equipment.
- 3) **Match/Games Organiser** – point of contact for opposition and pitch coordinator.
- 4) **Positive Scotland Ambassador/ Child Protection** – act as point of contact for parent/player/coach Child Protection concerns. Attend SYFA training course (encouraged). Promote use of Positive Scotland material and attendance at workshops.
- 5) **First Aider** – obtain SYFA approved Sports First Aid qualification.

Organising players into Squads for Coaching

Why do this?

- Teaching young players in completely mixed ability groups is very difficult both for the coaches but primarily for the children.
- Coaches inevitably end up teaching to the middle-level with players on either side losing out.
- Young players will get more touches of the ball and gain more enjoyment at their own ability level.

How Spartans approach this:

- Aim to create smaller groups of 8/10

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- Head Coach will organise after consultation with other coaches
- Ideally coaches will move round all squads and will not work with the same group all the time. This helps all coaches and players get to know each other and makes it easier to move players around squads.
- Every few weeks the Head Coach will ensure all players are mixed into different squads. This helps to build friendships, gauge development and challenge all players.
- This also helps with the players development by working with different coaching styles and personalities

Note: At a young age, size, height and strength will not be a significant factor. Being stronger and bigger now, does not mean a player will be the strongest or biggest in 5 years' time! Players mature and develop at different times so please look at all players D.O.B for a guide.

Other Considerations:

- **Attitude:** Hard work, effort, teamwork, listening and concentration skills.
- **Attendance:** Coming to training as often as possible with a recommended attendance of 75% but **remember players should be doing other sports**

Our Criteria for players (9, 10, 11 & 12 Year Olds)

Speed / Agility

- Running with the ball
- Running without the ball
- Changing direction
- Reactions/multi directions

Game Awareness

- Understanding the game
- When to pass or not?
- Support/switching play etc.
- When & where to run to
- Checking the shoulder

Technical Skills

- Passing – both feet
- Control – all parts of the body
- Shooting – different variations
- Ball mastery & moves to meet a player

Character

- Respect (for coaches, teammates, opposition, parents)
- Bounce-back-ability
- Leadership qualities
- Willing to help

Learning & improving

- Accepting of positive coaching
- Demonstrate desire and positive attitude
- Willingness to practise/complete homework tasks

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Spartans and Soccer 7s played on a Sunday

ESSDA Soccer 7s has different divisions to allow players and teams to play at an appropriate level. These leagues are Pele (strongest), Maradona, Zidane and Beckham (least strong).

Key Points to Remember

- In the first block of Soccer 7's splitting players into ability levels can be difficult.
- Groupings should not be set in stone and players can move around (ongoing development).
- A player does not learn anything in a game if he/she doesn't get any touches of a ball.
- Spartans teams must have an **equal playing time policy** - all players play for a similar length of time on match day, regardless of the match situation. That can be a difficult position to defend when you start losing games you know you could have won.
- To make this policy succeed requires good communication with parents and sometimes, a thick skin.

7-a-sides matches

- Teams consist of 1 goalkeeper and 6 outfield players. Experience suggests that a squad of 9 boys attending a match is ideal.
- Rolling substitutions are used throughout the match. Players who have been substituted may return to the field of play as often as necessary.
- It is best to plan ahead to ensure that substitutions are fair but be prepared to be flexible.
- Through planning, encourage players to play in more than one position during a match.
- Winning is Important but at this age it is not the main objective of the games for Spartans.
- **Parents and Coaches need to remember this not the World Cup and young players need the opportunity to play in a Positive, Challenging and Fun environment.**
- **MOST IMPORTANT - PLEASE LET THE PLAYERS PLAY and MAKE MISTAKES**

Additional Coaching Topics

Attendance at training and matches

Players need to attend training and matches to learn. However, remember players should be doing other Sports too as this aids development.

- Coaches will set the expectation that a 75% attendance rate is the target.
- Each age group will maintain a register to ensure that player attendance rates are recorded.
- If attendance drops please discuss with Parent or Guardian.

Rotation - Building a complete footballer

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At Spartans the target is to build rounded footballers and rotation is the approach. Whether a striker, defender, full-back or midfielder, he/she must be able to accept the ball, pass it, dribble and make the correct decisions.

- Players need opportunities to play in a different area of pitch (Defender, Striker, Left and Right).
- Rotation should occur regularly and at least every two weeks, with planning it can occur during a game – each coach can determine the frequency.

Behaviour – Adherence to Code of Conduct

- We expect the players to demonstrate respect and to try their best at training and matches
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Addressing Misbehaviour

- Tell player what is expected and why – if they continue to misbehave, get them to sit out in the 'Sin Bin' for a few minutes (remember to explain why).
- Bring them back in to the game and if they misbehave again, get them to sit out again (explain why).
- If the behaviour is significant, advise the parent – most parents want to know!

You can always talk to the CDO or Child Protection Officer for more information or support

Spartans Youth Development Squads.

A key challenge for the youth section is to aid players to progress through to the Spartans FC 1st team. To do this the club offers additional input for selected children to be coached in Development Squads.

These run in parallel with the age group squads and are coached by non-parent coaches.

Ask the Head Coach for more information or look at www.scottishfa.co.uk/developingtalent for more information.

Approach by a Professional Club

Our policy for players playing 7-a-side football

- Any requests from a professional club to sign or offer coaching to a Spartans Youth Section player should be directed to the Team Head Coach in the first instance.
- Under no circumstances should a professional club approach the player, or the parents or guardians of a player direct.
- If a professional club approaches a player and/or their parents/guardians direct, Spartans Youth Section will report the club in question to the SFA. In such cases the SFA will write to the club in question to remind them of the approved procedure, namely to contact the player's Team Head Coach in the first instance.

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- The Team Head Coach should inform the Youth Section Coach Development Officer, Stuart Gray (stuart.gray@spartansfcyouth.com) and The Spartans Development Manager, Iain Thomson (Iain.Thomson@spartansfc.com).
- The Team Head Coach should inform the parents and/or guardians to let them know an approach has been made and to find out if the player would like to join the club in question or attend coaching with them.
- In the event that the player would like to join the professional club the Team Head Coach, player and professional club will agree a 'suitable' transfer date, ensuring the player's needs come first.
- The players registration with Spartans FC Youth will be cancelled.
- In some cases the player can train with both a professional club and Spartans Youth Section. Such an arrangement should be agreed between all relevant parties.
- If an ex Spartans player is subsequently released by the professional club and wishes to re-join the Youth Section then an approach can be made to the Team Head Coach and the request will be considered.

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Information for Parents/Guardians

The challenge for Spartans Youth is to create an environment where players can learn and develop to their full potential and parents/guardians play a key role.

Key points

- **Regular attendance from players** – All players should attend training regularly if they want to be part of Spartans Youth. The minimum target for attendance is 75% across all sessions. If Players are attending additional Development Squads attendance to standard sessions is expected. Please ask Head Coach for more details on this.
- **Game-time** – If players want to play matches, they should attend training regularly. If you have a problem with this, please speak with the Head Coach.
- **Let the coaches coach** – Coaches are volunteers, so please respect their efforts. Leave the coaching to the coaches, this includes: motivating, feedback, setting goals and additional training. If you want to coach – raise a hand and volunteer.
- **Let the players play** – During training and matches, the players should be left to play – please don't distract them by calling out instructions. Players need to make their own decisions.
- **Encourage your child to talk to coaches** - if they are having difficulties, need help or have questions encourage them to speak directly to the coaches. Taking responsibility is part of developing as a player.
- **Be your child's best fan** – give your child unconditional support, irrespective of performance. Encourage them, be supportive, cheer appropriately.
- **Support all the players** – cheer on everyone in the team. Foster teamwork, this way the team will benefit from learning from each other.
- **Encourage practice** – Many players will be given homework, encourage your child to do the homework. The coaches can easily see who has practiced and who has not.
- **Encourage good eating and sleeping habits** – it's hard to perform at training or during a match if you haven't had your breakfast or a good sleep.
- **Keep a check on reality** - if the team has lost but have tried their best, help your child see this as a "win". The focus should be on progress and not results.
- **Help your child prioritise so all obligations can be fulfilled** - football, schoolwork, friendships, other interests and activities without feelings of stress.
- **All parents can play an active role in their team** – coaching is not the only role. There are lots of small tasks that need done to run a successful age group, e.g. taking the register, writing newsletters, fundraising, helping as a Child Protection Officer or First Aider. Talk to the Head Coach to volunteer – it is fun to help the age group!
- **Volunteering beyond the team** - Spartans is run by volunteers so please contact Club Manager - Spartans FC Youth <clubmanager@spartansfcyouth.com> to discuss any opportunities to volunteer beyond the age group.

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- **Please pay your subs on time.** Spartans budget carefully but relies on player subs to function effectively. Your subs pay for basic equipment, match strips, pitch bookings and supporting infrastructure.

Additional funding

If you are lucky enough to have a successful business, please sponsor an age group. A donation can help fund an age group to have additional, kit, footballs, equipment etc. Ask About Sponsorship details.

Parents Code of Conduct

Please download a copy from the website and read it. Remember not only are you watching your players... they are watching you, so don't embarrass them by misbehaving. If your child's performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Keep your goals and needs separate from your child's experience.

Parent's Role

Taxi Driver

Chef

Head Cheerleader

Role Model

First Aider

- It's not the Premier league
- Parents should stand on the other side of the pitch from the coaches
- Remember the players are busy with the ball (encourage them but let them play)
- **PLEASE DO NOT COACH FROM THE SIDELINES / LEAVE THAT TO THE COACHES**

Have Fun!

If you have any question or query in the first instance talk to the Head Coach or alternatively see the Small-sided Age Groups Manager. If they cannot resolve your query then speak to the Coach Development Officer or the Youth Section Management Committee.

For further information see our website at: <http://spartansfcyouth.com/>

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