



Youth Soccer: Creating a Smarter Consumer

My child has an interest in playing youth soccer. How do I find an appropriate place for him/her to participate? What do I need to know? What do the experts recommend? Are there industry “best practices” I should be aware of?

When one purchases any good or service (IE. a car, an appliance, the services of a good mechanic, contractor or family physician, etc.) they will invest the necessary time and effort needed to do the research that enables them to become an informed consumer. We hope the information provided in this section will assist parents in making informed decisions with regard to finding the best place for their children to experience the game of soccer, regardless of their child’s age, ability or gender. If we all agree that our children are our greatest asset, then it’s essential that we all do the necessary research needed to put them in the best position to flourish as they pursue their interests. As in any marketplace, a smarter consumer will demand a better product. Increasing the number of well informed soccer parents (who are seeking out optimal youth soccer playing opportunities for their own children), increases the pressure on the youth soccer market to provide optimal youth soccer playing opportunities for all children. Your knowledge shapes the market place.

We have compiled a list of commonly asked questions and supplied the links to the industry expert’s answers. It is your responsibility to become a well informed parent so you can make the best choices for the successful long term development of your child.

What does a healthy youth sports environment look like for a child?

Experts agree, fun and progress are essential. Any athlete finds that the mental concentration and physical effort necessary for success comes easily when the activity provides enjoyment.

See: Aspen Institute – Project Play – State of Play

https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/10/StateofPlay2018_v4WEB_2-FINAL.pdf

See: Aspen Institute – Calls for Coaches

https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/03/CallForCoaches_Final_Web_v2.pdf

What does a good soccer learning environment look like?

Model youth soccer clubs have a mission statement. It includes their philosophy and a sound player development strategy with age appropriate curriculums that are taught by a qualified/certified coaching staff.

See: US Soccer PDI (Best Practices)

<http://nyswysa.org/files/us-soccer-mandates/PDI%20aug2017%20ENG.pdf>

See: English FA (Best Practices)

[file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/USER/My%20Documents/Downloads/youth-football-guide-2018-mobile-version%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/USER/My%20Documents/Downloads/youth-football-guide-2018-mobile-version%20(3).pdf)

When looking for a club for my child what should I be looking for?

A youth soccer club or program that provides a good learning environment that is age and ability appropriate for your child.

See: Aspen Institute – Project Play - Parent Check List (See: Ages 6-12 Who Play Sports)

<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/projectplayparentchecklists>

See: US Club Soccer Youth Club Standards

<https://usclubsoccer.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/US-Club-Soccer-Youth-Club-Standards-2012-02-16.pdf>

See: US Youth Soccer Parent Resources (See: How to Choose a Club)

<https://www.usyouthsoccer.org/parent-resources/>

How important is winning and losing in selecting a program for my child?

Successful long term player development, particularly in zone 1 players (12 and under), is best achieved when the development of players' skills and physical literacy takes precedent over winning games. Unfortunately, there are still too many instances at the youth level where the desire to win at all costs comes at the expense of individual player development.

See: NSCAA – Winning vs. Development

http://ww2.nscAA.com/news/2013/10/winning-v-player-development--pt-1?utm_medium=short_url

What is my role as a parent of a child in youth soccer?

Be a loving and supporting parent. Develop an appreciation and understanding of what a good child centered learning environment looks like so you can identify/select the appropriate program to place your child in.

See: Aspen Institute – Project Play - Parent Check List (Ages 6-12 Who Play Sports)

<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/projectplayparentchecklists>

See: US Youth Soccer

https://www.usyouthsoccer.org/sideline_etiquette_6_tips_to_make_youth_soccer_better_for_parents_and_players/

<https://www.usyouthsoccer.org/what-parents-can-expect-from-their-first-soccer-experience/>