

Hello Parents,

Welcome to another season of Franklin soccer!

This letter is written specifically for parents of our new under 9 / under 10 “Junior Academy” players (typically 3rd and 4th graders). The Academy has a specific vision and mission, and we want to share it with our families.

If you don’t have an older child in our program, you may have asked yourself “what is the Academy?” All FYSA players pass from our Instructional Program (U6, U7, U8) into our Academy prior to moving into Travel soccer. The purpose of the Academy is to ensure that all players in this age group receive the proper training to continue developing the skills necessary to play the sport at a higher level.

Because the U9/U10 age is a crucial stage in a player’s development, the focus is on developing proper technique and avoiding building bad habits (which are very difficult to undo at puberty and beyond). We want them to be comfortable with the ball at their feet and confident on the field. We want them to take risks, learn how to play creatively, and begin to think like soccer players. Of course, we also want them to have **fun!**

Here’s some information that may be useful to you.

What happens on the field during weekdays?

- FYSA hires professional coaches to oversee the first day of player training each week, and to work with the volunteer coaches to help them better understand what to look for, and how to improve a player’s performance.
- The second day of player training each week is led by our volunteer coaches.
- All training is done in small group formats. This exposes our players to many coaches, and our coaches to many players.

What happens on the field during Saturday games?

- Players are presented with games where they can engage both physically and technically at their level of readiness.
- Each week, the players work on a new area of technical development, and the coaches’ focus for that week during the Saturday games is to “connect the dots,” from training to the real game.
- Although the volunteer coaches are trying to coach many different aspects of the game on Saturdays, they try to concentrate their attention (and comments) on the topic of the week so that the players learn why they need to perform a skill in a certain way to succeed.
- Because players learn best in a competitive environment, the “Academy Model” requires that opposing coaches work together during games to ensure that competition remains as even as they can make it. Players won’t develop their skill sets during a blowout. Players may be switched between teams during a game to even up the game a bit. We may even move a few players during the season in order to balance teams.

How can you help your child develop?

- **Talk to them about training** - and what they learned at practice. Having a child explain how to do something helps to cement that information in his/her own head, and the player is more likely to remember and try to do it that way.

- **Avoid “coaching” from the sidelines** - Please cheer them on, but try to avoid telling them what to do while they play. Players need to try to figure things out on their own while they play, and coaches need to be heard if they are making corrections. Mixed messages are difficult for the players.
- **Know the topic of the week** - Knowing what they are working on will guide your enthusiasm. Telling a player to “Pass!” or cheering when they boot it hard (when we’re asking them to take on a defender with the dribble) will be counterproductive. The topic of week will be posted at the bottom of the stairs at Lower Dacey beginning on week #2.
- **Be patient with our referees** – Our Academy referees are generally young and new. These games serve as training for them as well. A referee mentor is on the field each week to work with the refs.
- **Use the resources at the field** - Franklin Soccer School is on hand during training and during games on Saturdays. They oversee the technical development, and are always willing to answer questions. They’re a great resource for you to explore ways for you to help your child improve.

I hope this is helpful information. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact me. I’ll be running our end of season tournament on week #9 and week #10 (a fun event for the kids!). You’ll be receiving a tournament schedule from your coach shortly after the mid-point in the season.

Thanks,

Matt O’Keefe

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