

SSA RESPECT PROGRAM

Southern Soccer Academy encourages all parents, referees, and coaches to recognize the shared responsibility that they have when it comes to providing a safe, welcoming, and nurturing environment for all our players as our players learn the game of soccer. When the relationship between these parties is mutually respectful, the game of soccer can not only be a wonderful opportunity for youngsters to enjoy a physical activity, but also provide them with valuable life lessons along the way.

To assist in this process, SSA promotes a clubwide General Code of Conduct found [HERE](#).

For a checklist for life lessons we hope your child will learn through their youth soccer experience, please scroll down to the bottom of this page.

There are times though when the behavior of those entrusted with building a positive environment for our players is less than desirable, leading to the creation of an antagonistic environment that is to the detriment of our young players. If referees, coaches, and parents are able to recognize these kinds of negative behaviors and focus on instead acting in a respectful manner to each other, everyone will benefit.

When it comes to helping parents and coaches identify their responsibilities at the fields, the FA in England produced these two videos to illustrate two of the most commonly destructive behaviors shown on the sidelines - referee abuse and excessive criticism of young players:

“Listen to This Muppet”

<https://youtu.be/ezZ2ZRfSsLY>

“People Like You and Me Wouldn’t Stand For it Would We”

<https://youtu.be/7-6NMMZU1kQ?si=MY5-qSoFwzw5yPWk>

Georgia Soccer recently identified a loss rate of 35% from the state's referee pool every year for example, driven in part by the negative behaviors of both coaches and parents as illustrated in the first video. As a consequence of these behaviors, clubs are having to replace older, experienced referees who are dropping out of youth soccer with younger, inexperienced referees, leading to the potential for a short-term decline in the quality of the refereeing at the average soccer game until these young referees gain more experience. If coaches and parents can appreciate the long-term benefits of working in a respectful manner with these younger referees in particular, rather than becoming distracted in the short term by 'blown calls' or a referee's lack of experience, the referee pool itself should become deeper and more qualified/experienced leading to a better experience for everyone in the future.

Life Lessons:

Practice Makes...Better: It's not about being perfect. It's about getting better and improving. One of the life lessons we hope our children learn through sports is that their effort will be rewarded.

Focus on what you can control: Youth sports should help kids learn that all they can do is focus on their effort, and not the outcome. They should focus on what they can control, not what is out of their control.

Let go of mistakes: Successful athletes brush off mistakes. They acknowledge them, they learn from them and they then move past them. They put them in the past.

Keep learning: We're constantly learning – from our successes but also from our mistakes. Youth sports should help kids recognize that even the best players are constantly learning and working to get better. It's an approach to life that will serve us all well.

Celebrate Success: Sports teach us to celebrate success – large and small. We all know how to celebrate winning the game, but sports can also help us learn to celebrate the smaller goals we set for ourselves, and see winning in a whole new light.

Become a true team player: Sports should teach our children what we mean by a true team player – someone who contributes 100%, and at the same time cooperates and collaborates with teammates to help bring out their best too.

Win and Lose with Dignity: It's called "Honoring the Game" in sports. And we hope our young athletes learn to both win and lose while respecting themselves, their teammates, their opponents and the officials and organization that help make their sport experience possible. As an adult, how we define "game" changes, but we hope sports teaches us all to win and lose with dignity and respect.