

Micro Division Guidelines

Updated August 2009

"Micro soccer is offered for boys and girls who are 3 and 4 years old. This is an introductory program allowing children to experience a team sport and an athletic pursuit in a soccer environment developed especially for this young age group. The teams are coed. They play five to a side on small fields with small goals and no goalie. Coaches are on the field to help the players and make sure they are going the right direction. Other than the YMCA, Crusaders is the only club to offer Micro soccer in the area."

<http://www.sandiegocrusaders.com>

Micro soccer is for children ages 3 and 4 and some 5 year-olds that meet the cut-off date of July 31st. At this age, playing soccer should mean one thing – having fun! Competition and the importance of winning should be downplayed, and an emphasis should be placed upon good sportsmanship, teamwork, and physical fitness.

The Micro soccer program allows young children to develop very basic ball skills and teaches the fundamental rules that define what the game is all about. Our goal is to provide a scaled-down version of the game in a safe and relatively structured environment.

The **Micro Division Guidelines** are intended to help coaches, their assistants, and parents have a successful, fun, and less stressful season. The guidelines also establish a common set of "rules" for organizing and playing games.

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Team Roster and Administrative Forms

After you have received your team, you will need to complete two important pieces of paperwork: the team roster and the league administrative form. Your team's uniforms will be given to you **after** you

complete and submit these forms to the *Micro Division Coordinator*. A sample Team Roster form and Administrative form are included at the end of these guidelines.

Parent's Meeting

Before your first practice, it is helpful to meet with the parents of your players and discuss how you would like to manage the team. Encourage parent participation! You need the help of parents to make the entire experience more rewarding for all involved. The meeting should last no more than an hour (or so) and should cover such items as:

- Micro division rules (ball size, game length, rules to be enforced).
- Season events (opening day, first game, end of season party).
- Required equipment (shin guards, ball, and cleats).
- Practice place, time, and length.
- Volunteers for assistant coach(es), team parent, banner maker.
- Potential team sponsors.
- Team name.

A sample Parent's Meeting handout is included with these guidelines. The meeting can be as formal or informal as you like.

Team Sponsors

Each team needs a sponsor. This is a business or person that would like to support the community and receive recognition in the annual Crusaders Directory which lists each of the teams, their players, and their sponsor.

Sponsors make a donation to the league of \$150, and the league returns a portion of the donation (\$50) to the team to help reduce the cost of trophies or the team party. Team sponsors should be identified as soon as possible so that the person making the team banner can incorporate the sponsor name in their banner if they so desire. A sample Sponsor Recruitment letter is included with these guidelines.

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Banner and Mascot

Once the kids have chosen a name for the team, you will need a banner for Opening Day, pictures, and to be displayed at your games. Most banners include the children's names, and some banners display the name of the sponsor. Banners can be hand made, or purchased locally for about \$75.00. Some local stores that will make banners include:

- *A-Plus Sure Sign & Awards in El Cajon (619-593-1194)*
- *Instant Signs of Santee (619-448-9580)*

- *A&S-Unlimited Banners and Signs on Mission Gorge (619-229-8540)*

In addition to a banner, you may wish to make or buy a team "mascot" that can be hung on the goal to help the children remember which way they are to go when they get the ball. This should be a small, soft object that can be safely attached to the goal – something that will help the children recognize the goal at which to shoot.

Snack Schedule

Each week during the season, parents take turns bringing drinks, a small healthy snack (granola bars, etc.), and quartered oranges for the players at halftime. After you receive your game schedule (late August), your Team Parent will need to assign a player/family to provide a snack and oranges for each game. The easiest way to do this is alphabetically, repeating the order as necessary.

Uniforms

Before Opening Day, you will need to get the first names (**only**) of your players on the back of their jerseys. This can be done by local sporting goods stores. Your Team Parent will need to collect the money for this, either by player according to the length of his/her name or by dividing the total amount evenly amongst all players; it is up to your Team Parent. Some local stores that will put letters on jerseys include:

- *Al's Sport Shop in Santee @ 45¢ per letter (619-562-4263)*
- *Berry's Athletic Supply in Lemon Grove @ 35¢ per letter (619-466-1248)*
- *Soccer USA on Mission Gorge @ 40¢ per letter (619-282-8322)*
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The time, place, and length of practices is up to the Coach. The number of practices each week is also up to the Coach. Teams are **allowed** to start practicing the first week of August. Most Micro division teams start practicing in early August as the younger players need extra time to learn basic skills and rules before the first game.

Practicing twice a week before the season and then once a week during the season is typical. Practices should run for no more than about 45 minutes.

Plan your practices so that you know what you are going to do before you get on the field – kids don't like to stand still or wait while you think of something to do. Keep things moving and try and make everything a game. Start by stretching or jogging to get the kids used to warming up.

Teach skills by incorporating them into games such as relay races. Teach rules by introducing concepts one at a time in concrete ("touch and feel") ways (e.g., make a game out of walking on the lines). End each practice on a positive note by playing a game that is perhaps related to but not necessarily part of soccer (e.g., freeze tag within the confines of the soccer field).

Remember:

- Play safely.
- Make sure the kids and you are having fun.
- Take plenty of breaks for water (every ten minutes or so).
- Start on time and end on time.
- Encourage parent participation!

There are several parks and schools in the immediate area that have been designated for Crusaders use, San Carlos Rec Center for example. You are welcome to practice wherever it is safe and convenient for your team. Availability of lighted fields is very limited, so that after the time change in October you may have to shift the times that you practice. Allied Gardens Rec Center is perhaps the best lit field in the area.

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Overview

Micro soccer games are "scaled-down" to accommodate the smaller size and limited stamina of our young players. The object is to increase the chances that the children will get to kick the ball and to score. Everyone is given equal playing time, and, at this age, there should be no assigned positions. Defense and offense are concepts that may be taught, but the children should be allowed to run and have fun without regard for staying in a certain spot on the field.

Micro division soccer game facts and figures:

Field Size:	20 yards wide by 35 yards in length (approximate).
Goal Size:	4 feet wide by 3 feet high (approximate).
Game Length:	4 ten minute quarters; 5 minute break at half-time.
Number of Players:	5 on the field at a time; no goalie.
Ball Size:	3 (three).

Organization and Rules

A little bit of organization will make the entire soccer experience more enjoyable for everyone. The following outlines how Micro division games

will be organized and played:

1. One Coach/Parent on the Field at a Time

Each team can have one (and only one) adult on the field at a time during the game. This can be a parent, coach, or assistant coach. This person's job is to act as cheerleader and to keep their team going in the right direction. Share the on-field coaching job – it's fun!

2. One Referee on the Field at a Time

There will be one referee on the field during the game. The referee is in charge of two things; enforcing the rules in a kind/gentle/fair manner and keeping track of time. The referee is the only one that should be blowing a whistle. The referee job should be shared equally by the two teams; one team supply the referee for the first half of the game and the other team supply the referee for the second half. The referee can be anyone that is responsible and aware of the rules given in these guidelines.

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3. Five (5) Players on the Field Per Team Max

Each team can have no more than five (5) players on the field at a time. The field simply becomes too crowded and less safe with more than five per side. Substitute kids frequently and everyone will have equal and ample playing time.

4. Teach and Enforce the Lines

When the ball obviously leaves the field, stop play. It confuses the kids when this rule is not enforced consistently (some kids stop when they see the ball leave the field and wonder why everyone else hasn't stopped). The entire ball must cross the line before it is out.

5. Teach and Enforce Throw-Ins

When the ball goes out over the side lines, the referee should allow a throw-in for the team that did **not** kick the ball out. Throw-ins are done with both feet on the ground and completely behind the line; the ball is thrown over the head with both hands.

6. Teach and Enforce Goal Kicks

If the ball is kicked out over a team's goal line by the opposing team, then the referee should allow a goal kick for the team whose goal line the ball passed over (the team that did **not** kick the ball out). The players on the opposing team should be outside the penalty area.

7. Teach and Enforce Corner Kicks

If the ball is kicked out over a team's goal line by one of its own players, then the referee should allow a corner kick for the opposing

team (the team that did **not** kick the ball out). The players on the opposing team should allow the other team plenty of room to bring the ball in play.

8. Teach the Children to Stay Out of the Goal

One or two bodies fill up the goal so that it is nearly impossible to score (even for big guys). That's no fun! Keep children from standing in the goal. This is not intended to discourage teaching defense, but think about the kids on the other team and how frustrating it is to be physically unable to get the ball through a wall of legs blocking the goal. We don't keep stats, and shut outs don't count for much. The referee should "help" coaches keep kids from standing in the goal.

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9. Be Lenient of Bad Throw-Ins, Goal Kicks, and Corner Kicks

The referee should not be overly critical of bad throw-ins, goal kicks, or corner kicks. He/she should help the kids get them right as opposed to giving the ball to the other team for a bad throw-in, etc. It is the thought that counts.

10. Watch the Time

Start on time, end on time – it's only fair. No one likes to wait, especially three and four year olds. 10 minute quarter, 2 minute break, 10 minute quarter, 5 minute half, 10 minute quarter, 2 minute break, 10 minute quarter, and you're done. Ten minutes (unless it's hot) is not too much time for a four year old to run around, especially if he/she has a ready and eager substitute waiting to play in his/her place.

11. No Switching Sides

It is sometimes difficult to get the kids going in the right direction. Switching sides complicates this issue even more, and takes up valuable time (especially if you use a mascot to help the kids recognize their goal and have to move it at half time).

12. Ready Substitutions

Coaches should stress to the parents that the kids should stay with the coach on the sidelines when the game is in progress. This makes it easier for substituting players. It's okay for kids to visit their parents during breaks and at half time.

13. Willing Players

Never force a child to play if he or she is not ready. With positive reinforcement from the coaches and other players, these kids eventually want to join in on the **fun** on the field.

14. Discourage Unsafe Play

Everyone involved is charged with keeping the game safe. We do not encourage slide tackles or any other potentially dangerous play. The referee should call obvious fouls of this nature, e.g., tripping, pushing, hitting, and the like.

Keep the game moving, concentrate on having fun, and let the kids play!
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A typical game lasts for about fifty (50) minutes and should never go for more than one hour or you are cutting into another team's game time. The following is a break-down of the sequence of events for a **typical** game:

8:45am Warm Up

Players should arrive about 15 minutes before game time. This is a great opportunity to warm up by kicking a ball around or stretching out as a team.

9:00am Game Starts - First Quarter (10 Minutes)

Start on time or the rest of the day's games will be affected. Remember it takes time to get youngsters organized on the field.

9:10am Two Minute Break (Water)

Water only. This is just enough time for everyone to catch their breaths. It is also a good time to switch on-field coaches.

9:12am Second Quarter (10 Minutes)

Make sure someone is watching the time (like the referee) and gets the second quarter started promptly. Another ten minutes and it's half-time!

9:22am Five Minute Half-Time Break (Oranges)

Water and orange slices (or something very similar). Make sure the players are not overheated, and make sure they rest. This is when the teams switch the referee job.

9:27am Third Quarter (10 Minutes)

Start on time and don't take a 10 minute break or you'll never finish on time. The ball is started by the team that did **not** kickoff at the beginning of the game.

9:37am Two Minute Break (Water)

Water only. Another chance to switch the on-field coaching job.

9:39am Fourth Quarter (10 Minutes)

This is where you make up any time that you may have overrun. If you're running behind, then shorten the quarter accordingly. Last chance to get everyone equal playing time.

9:49am Game Ends - Everyone Wins!

Watch the time and make sure you don't go past 10 minutes before the next game.

9:50am Cheers

If you have a special cheer ("2, 4, 6, 8") then now's the time. Remember to thank the other coaches.

9:51am Human Tunnel

After every game, form a human tunnel by holding hands up high with the other parents.

Then run the kids through the tunnel with the appropriate amount of hooping and hollering!

9:55am Snacks and That's It

The Team Parent will have assigned someone to bring snacks for after the game.

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Opening Day

Opening Day usually takes place the first Saturday in September after Labor Day. It is held at Allied Gardens Rec Center, Opening Day activities include:

- Banner Contest
- Banner Parade
- Team Pictures
- Booth Sales (Food, Clothes, etc.)

This is a fund raising event for the Crusaders Soccer Club, and it is an exciting time for the children and their families as it marks the beginning of the season. Booths are manned by various teams for the purposes of selling goods to support league functions. Food and drinks are available.

You will be required to meet at a specified time for team pictures. Picture times are assigned sometime before Opening Day usually during a Coaches meeting or by the Micro Division Coordinator via phone.

Trophies

During the season, Crusaders will have a display of trophies at one of the Saturday games at San Carlos Rec Center. At that time, your Team Parent can choose your trophies, and also get Coaches/Assistant Coaches plaques if they choose. (As an added note, it is always nice to get a small gift for your Team Parent at the end of the season in appreciation of their hard work too.) If you have a sponsor, make sure to get them a plaque also. Parents pay for their child's trophy which usually costs between \$5.00 and \$7.00 for the Micro division.

End of the Season Party

The Team Parent will also need to plan your team party that takes place at the end of your season. This is the time when all trophies are handed out by the coaches. You may want to choose the place to have your team party by mid-November if you want to make reservations at a restaurant. Or, some teams choose to have their team party right after the last game at San Carlos Rec Center in the picnic area (these are just ideas and suggestions). If

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you have a sponsor, you will receive \$50.00 toward either your team party or your trophies, whichever you choose. If your team does not have a sponsor, each parent will need to pay for the child's trophy and food.

Player Evaluation Form

Toward the end of the season (before the second-to-last game), Coaches will be asked to turn in their Player Evaluation form. The information on the evaluation form helps Division Coordinators develop equally balanced teams for the next season. It is important to fill out the form as honestly and accurately as possible (the forms are given **only** to the Division Coordinators). See the sample Evaluation form included with these guidelines.

The Micro Division Coordinator is your primary source of information and assistance. The Boys Recreational Program Director is also available to assist you.

The Recreational Program Director is: **Dan Rubin 619-501-9957**
dantbdman@cox.net

For more information, see the Crusaders website at:

<http://www.sandiegocrusaders.com>

Thank you for your support and have a fun season!

Sincerely,

Crusaders Micro Division Coordinator

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- **Sample Parent's Meeting Handout**
- **Sample Sponsor Recruitment Letter**