

Pelham Soccer Club



Coaches Manual



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Soccer



The Greatest Game On Earth

Introduction

If you are reading this manual, you have probably signed up to coach a soccer team with Pelham Soccer Club. First, we thank you for your willingness to help out, and we hope that you enjoy the experience of coaching as much as the kids enjoy playing.

How to use this manual

This manual was assembled to help all PSCI coaches regardless of their experience. Novice coaches can use the practice plans and drill diagrams to help prepare for practice each week. Experienced coaches can use the skill target guidelines to focus their plans to help each player develop the skills needed to play soccer well.

Philosophy

The philosophy of PSCI is simple: if young players first learn to love playing soccer, they will want to play it well. With that in mind, we want our coaches to stress fun and fundamentals. Players should love coming to practice and leave excited about what they've learned. Hopefully, this manual will provide you with ideas and practice games that will be fun for the kids while at the same time develop the essential skills they need to feel good about themselves as players. It will also establish skill targets for each age category so you can determine how well your players are doing.

In general, though, Pelham coaches are charged with allowing each player to discover and explore his or her soccer identity. Is he a goal scoring striker? Is she a playmaking winger? Maybe a solid two-way midfielder or a steady defender? Second, coaches should encourage players to be creative, to take chances and to not be afraid to make mistakes. Encourage all your players to take on defenders one on one, to go to goal looking to score and to make



decisions on the field. Be active players, not passive. Be aggressive, not defensive. Most of all, encourage your players to use the skills they are developing in practice during the game.

Finally, remember that at the Timbit, Pre-Squirt, Squirt and older house league level, the final score and end of season record is well down the list of priorities. The emphasis here is on fun and skill development. Success is not based on standings or game statistics but on the enthusiasm of the players and, ultimately, the number of players who come back the next year.

These priorities are endorsed by Canada's national soccer program as outlined in the coaching portion of Soccer Canada's website:

A Coach's Creed

The Primary responsibility of a youth soccer coach is to help the young player to have fun, learn and improve. This responsibility makes a youth coach different from any other official in the club, league or association. We (coaches) coach for the joy and success of the players - and no other reason.

Role of the Coach

"A coach should help to improve the performance of the players (and the team) both physically and psychologically. The position of coach is demanding and multi-faceted. Parent, teacher, counselor, disciplinarian, organizer...these are some of the duties demanded of the coach. When players sign-up with a club, they expect to receive something for their registration fee. They want to play and learn and they also want to do so in an enjoyable environment...As coaches, we must try to find out what potential a player has so that we can develop that potential and make the player the best player he or she can be."

With those grand objectives, PSCI has provided this set of skill development ideas to help all of our coaches achieve success.



Skill Priorities

For many coaches, especially those new to the game of soccer, the game can be a blur of skills and demands. It is difficult, at times, to know just what the players should be learning or what they should already know at any given stage. To help, this manual has set out a series of basic skill development priorities — things every player should be able to do by the time they are eight or nine years old. These foundation abilities ensure that the player's skills are well rooted in the fundamentals, enabling them to grow and blossom to the extent that their own personal interest and dedication will allow.

Dribbling:

Fundamental to early soccer development is basic ball skill. Coaches should dedicate time every practice to improving this area, starting with warm up exercises. If you want to have your players run, make them take a ball with them. Encourage them to keep their heads up. Provide opportunities for them to dribble in a variety of situations — in open field, in crowds, in 1v1 situations — and at a variety of speeds. Have them change direction and use different parts of their feet. A single dribbling exercise can be adapted and refreshed simply by challenging the player to use a different style of dribbling.

These foundation abilities ensure that the player's skills are well rooted in the fundamentals

Use of both feet:

The primary reason many players never develop the ability to use the left foot is because they are never asked to do so. Players as young as four or five should be encouraged to use their left foot in all shooting, dribbling and passing exercises. At that age, while they may prefer the right side, they have not developed the true dominance that can lead to exclusivity. It is much easier for them to develop their left side from the beginning than it is to build it up once the dominance is established. This can be accomplished simply by requiring the players to work on their weak side. If the drill calls for the player to dribble across the field, have them dribble back using only their left foot.

Mental Game:

The difference between an average player and a good player is skill. The difference between a good player and an exceptional player is the ability to think on the field. This is a skill that can be developed, just like passing or shooting. Encourage players to make decisions and act on them. Have them ask the questions, “What do I do if the ball comes to me?”, and “What is happening and what should I be doing?”. Do not be afraid to freeze scrimmages or small-sided games

to offer instruction on what the players should be doing or where they should be going.

Fitness:

Much has been said and written about the activity level of young people in our society, too much in fact to go into here. However, it is important to note that soccer players are among the most well-conditioned athletes around. It is not necessary to send your players to run laps of the field unless you are using the time to set up the next drill. Even then, have them take a ball with them and dribble while they run. For the purposes of your practices, fitness should be an integral part of every activity. When running a drill involving lines, keep those lines short so players are involved in the play more often. Frequent water breaks are important, but keep them short and get the kids back into the exercises as quickly as possible. In short, make conditioning an integral part of every exercise for the full 60 minutes of your practice, not an isolated (and dull) 10 or 15 minute block.

Competition

It is virtually impossible to completely eliminate the competitive aspect from minor sports. In any situation where a score is kept, there will be a competitive element. However, it is important to realize that young players come to your team for a variety of reasons, but most commonly it is to have fun. That's why many young players enjoy playing with their friends, relatives, neighbours and classmates. Some children thrive in competitive situations and, in fact, need that to maintain interest. Others will shrink from intense competition. You will have both on your team and it is important to balance both.

As a general guideline, however, remember that you are coaching children, not professionals. Fun and fair competition is the over-arching goal. The final result in any one game is never as important as the health and wellbeing of the players. Winning at the expense of a player's self-confidence is no victory. What does that mean in a practical sense?

Balanced Playing Time:

To the best of their abilities, every coach must endeavor to share playing time equally between players. While it is virtually impossible to do so, playing the “best” player for the entire game and rotating other players around him or her is unacceptable. The goal of PSCI is the development of all players to their maximum potential, not the production of a handful of great players. A critical element to that development is playing time. A weak player will not improve if you bolt them to the bench. They improve by playing and taking on roles within the team.

Fair Competition:

This means, when possible, coaches and officials will ensure the competitive balance of the teams is maintained. Teams should always play with an equal number of players on the field even if that means playing with fewer players than the division allows. In lopsided games, the winning team should use the opportunity to develop other aspects. This doesn't mean the winning team should stop trying or good players should be relegated to the bench. Instead, require your players to pass the ball a certain number of times before taking a shot, or have them make a pass back to the defense before starting a new rush, or only allow shots generated off a cross, or quietly assign the team to set up a particular player for a goal. Whatever the case, challenge your players to work on skills. Blowouts can teach players more than the fact that after scoring six goals, they can score a seventh, eighth and ninth.

Have Fun:

Remember, if you are having fun your players will probably have fun, too. Laugh. Joke with your players. Play with them at practice. Try to incorporate fun games into every practice. Sing "Happy Birthday" to any player celebrating a birthday during the week. Cheer when a player scores.

Praise Effort:

Do not reserve your congratulations for the best players. Take time to celebrate the player whose effort is consistently high even if their successes are not. Reserve some high-fives for the player whose pass set up the goal, or whose tackle prevented a scoring chance. Also, support any player's attempt to beat a defender one on one with skill even if the attempt is unsuccessful.

Respect:

Fundamental to creating a healthy, enjoyable atmosphere is respect for everyone associated with the game — teammates, opponents, coaches and officials. It is essential, however, that you as a coach model this. Verbal abuse of referees, players or other coaches is unacceptable in any situation and can drive some players away from the game even if they are not the target of the abuse. In particular, how you treat referees is of utmost importance. Remember that most of the refs at the house league level are only a few years older than the players, and many of them are rookies. They are learning. Treat them with understanding and respect. Help them learn and improve; don't drive them out of the job by treating them badly. Abuse from parents and coaches is the main reason given by young refs to explain why they hang up the whistle.

The Best and Worst

Every coach has them. No matter what group of players

you get, you are likely to find one or two will be head and shoulders better than all of the others and one or two will make you wonder why they show up at all. The fact is, both type of players deserve special attention.



It is the nature of any coach to lean on the talents of the best player and there is nothing wrong with that. Every coach wants a player who can be counted upon to score two, three or four goals a game. However, the caution here is make sure that player is developing as a soccer player and is not getting by simply thanks to superior athletic ability. Take time in practice to break down your star's skills. Can he or she dribble with the head up? Is he or she kicking the ball with the sweet spot on the foot? How often does he or she use the opposite foot? These areas are critical to the eventual development of the player. A lot of talent has died on the vine because of complacency. If you discover a weakness, you owe it to the player to correct the mistake, which might meet with some resistance from both the player and the parent. But stick to your guns; demand that the player use proper technique and correct skills during games.

If all of those things seem to be in order, don't be afraid to challenge your player with a goal for each game. It could

Insist that they use their skills consistently either to succeed themselves or to help teammates succeed

be a minimum number of goals, but it would be better to concentrate on a specific aspect of the game. Ask the player to take on a beat at least one defender each time he or she has the ball. Show them a "trick" move and have them pull it off at least once per game. Tell them to avoid scoring until they've helped set up a goal for another player, preferably one at the bottom end of the roster. This experience will force the player to think about how they play the game and will keep the experience interesting because, believe it or not, scoring can become quite boring.

Most importantly, though, insist on a consistency of effort. Great players can get lazy, allowing their superior athletic ability to shine when they want it to, then doing nothing for long stretches of time. They can also develop practice bad habits, believing their success means they don't need to practice. Either of these can be deadly to a good player's future in the game because they will become bored from lack of development or quit when they encounter and cannot handle superior competition. Insist that these players

10. Drills & Skills — Squirt

Skill Targets

Fun
More dribbling
Use of both feet
Shooting
Working with team mates

Working with team mates

There comes a point in a player's development where they must begin thinking of themselves as a small part of a larger entity — the team. This is best done through small-sided games. It is generally regarded in coaching circles that games involving 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 and variations thereof are the most effective way of developing the player's ability in many areas. In fact, it has been argued that the full-sided soccer game can be reduced to a long series of 1v1 and 2v1 situations — shooter vs goalie, forward vs defender, two defenders vs midfielder, etc.

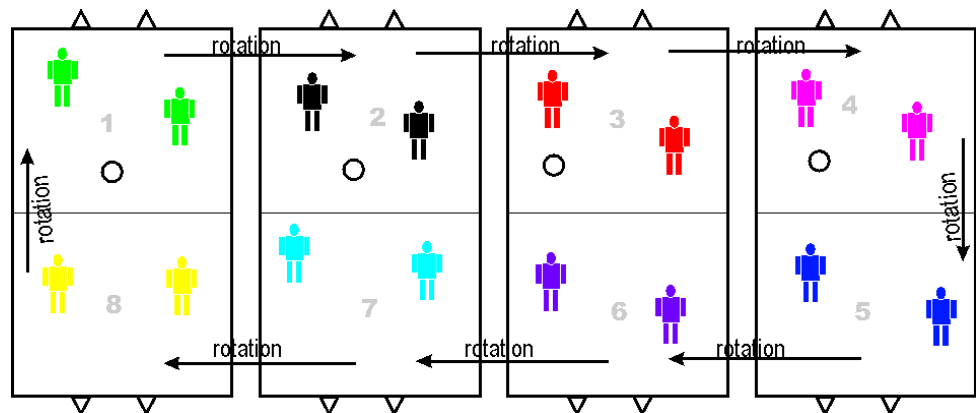
These games require players to dribble, pass, receive, shoot, work off the ball and, most importantly, think and make decisions in game situations. Here are a series of games that can be used as-is or adapted to suit your needs.

Drills

2v2 Tournament

Break your team into pairs and run a round robin 2v2 tournament. Create a number of small fields with goals at each end using cones, buckets, flower pots, etc. Each game is 5 minutes in length. Teams keep track of their own score and record. Allow the players to discover how to use the space on their own, but encourage and support demonstrations

and attempts at good individual skill including runs off the ball, etc. A team of 16 players will produce eight pairings and allow seven games. This is 35 minutes of non-stop play with plenty of touches and many opportunities to reinforce good play



This rotation ensures every team plays every other team at least once. If you have an odd number of teams, allow one team to sit out once at one end of the rotation.

The Oreo

Create three zones, roughly 18 yards wide and 10 yards deep. Divide the team into three groups placing one group in each zone. Introduce four balls. The goal is for players on the outside sections to pass balls through the creamy filling of the Oreo without it getting stuck. The team in the middle is charged with intercepting the passes. Every successful pass scores one point for the outside team. Every interception is one point for the creamy filling. Passes must be made to a target player on the opposite side, not fired blindly across the middle. Rotate the groups through the different zones so everyone gets a chance to be the filling. Encourage players to make themselves available for passes by finding, creating and moving into passing lanes, and communicating back and forth.

Keep Away

Break the team into groups of five. Give one ball to each group. Assign one player in each group to be "it". This player's job is to intercept a pass. The other four pass the ball between each other trying to keep the ball away from the "it" player. Encourage the four players to move to support the ball carrier and find open space. Encourage the tackler to close the gap on the ball carrier and force him or her rush the pass. As they get better at the game, challenge the players to think two or three passes ahead. If the ball is passed to Billy, where should Susan be to help Billy?



Skill Targets

Fun

More dribbling

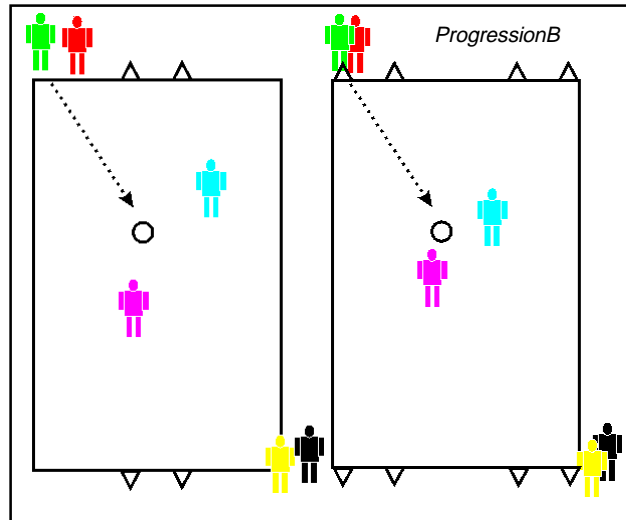
Use of both feet

Shooting

Working with team mates

1v1, 2 goals

Break your team into two groups and assign numbers to each member of each group. Use the inside of the 18 yard box for your playing area and put a small goal at each end. Put a collection of soccer balls behind the goal. The coach acts as the server and on playing a ball into the 18 yard box calls a number. The players on each team with that number run out and compete for the ball and try to score in the opposition net. The game continues for 1 minute or until a goal is scored. Encourage players with the ball to “beat” the defender with a fake or move. Encourage the defender to first contain the attacker, force them



to the sidelines away from the net and to keep the ball in front of them at all times. If they win the ball, the defender

immediately goes on offense and tries to score, while the attacker becomes a defender and must try to win the ball back. Once the players become accustomed to the game, it is possible to have two sets of two compete independent of each other in the area.

Another progression involves adding a second goal at each end and placing them in the corners rather than the centre of the short side.

All Back

A variation on All Up can be played on smaller fields with smaller numbers on each team. The game is played the same way, but the variation is that, on a turnover, the first pass must be back to the goalie, who moves the ball up field much as a quarterback would in football or a power play point man would in hockey. The first version emphasizes individual player movement from offense to

defense and back. The second version emphasizes movement into open space for a lead pass.

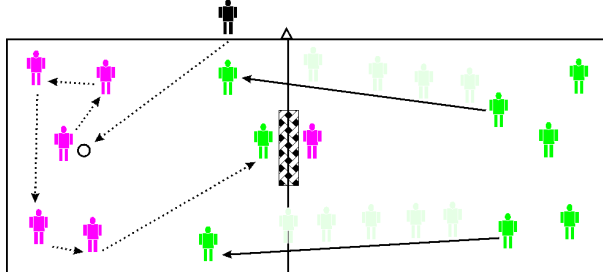
All Up

7v7. Use a half-field for this game with goals on the sidelines. Use a row of cones to mark the centre line of the field. The game is played just like regular soccer except in order for a goal to count every player, including the goalie, must be on the offensive side of the field.

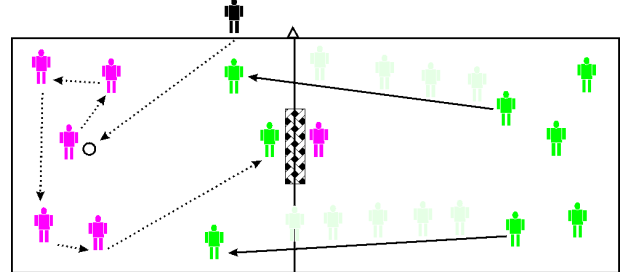
Borderline

5v2. Set up a goal in the middle of the field. One team of five occupies the North section, one is set in the South. The coach plays the ball into one area. That team (Team A) must make five passes before taking a shot on goal. The other team (Team B) sends two players across the

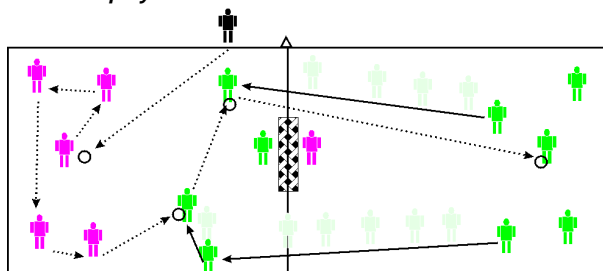
border to steal the ball. If they steal it they must play it back across the border and rejoin their team. They must now complete five passes before shooting while Team A sends two players in to recover the ball. If the goalie stops the shot, he or she simply deposits in the other zone and the game continues.



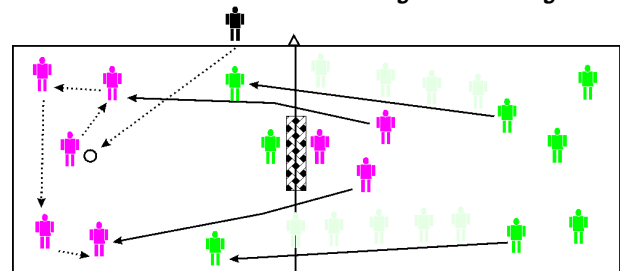
A - Ball is played to Team A. Team B tries to win the ball.



B - Team A works the ball around and gets a shot on goal.



C - Team B intercepts and plays it back to their side of the field



D - After a goal, the coach plays a ball in from the side.

1v1 + 1v1 + Goalies

Create a field roughly 30m x 20 m with goals at each end. Divide it in half using a row of cones. Split your team into two groups, Team A and Team B. In each half of the field there should be one member of each team. The extra players form a line to the right of the goals, Team A at one end, Team B at the other. Each team has a goalie at their end. That means at one end, Team A is defending the goal, while Team B is defending at the other. The ball is played into one side by the coach. The players at that end compete for the ball. The defensive player must win the ball and pass it across the centre line to his or her teammate on the opposite side. That player must then beat the defender and try to score. The defender meanwhile must try to win the ball and pass it back across centre for a scoring chance. Emphasis here is on finding open space and moving quickly to it. Encourage your players on offense to take on and beat the defender with a trick move or some sort of deception. Even if the attempt fails, praise the attempt. This game can be adapted to create either a 2v2 situation on both sides or an odd-man situation for the defending team (i.e. one defender vs two forwards). Another modification allows a defender to pass the ball to the first player in the reserve line to relieve pressure, then make a run to open space for the return pass.

Switch

Set up an area with two goals. This is a traditional 2v2 activity with a twist. At any point, the coach can shout "Switch", which means the teams must change direction and attack the other net. For example, Team A begins attacking the North goal, but on the command Switch, it must turn and attack the South goal. Team B, on the other hand is defending the North goal but must switch to defend the South goal. A progression for this is to create four goals, one at each compass point. In this, at the switch the teams go from playing North-South to playing East-West. These drills develop the player's ability to transition and make quick decisions.

Neutral

3v3+1. Use an area a little bigger than the 18 yard box with goals at the each narrow end. Put a goalie in each net. Assign one player to be neutral. Divide the rest of the team into groups of three. The neutral player is always on offense and plays for both teams but cannot score. Possession of the ball puts a team on offense. This team can pass to the neutral player. The defensive team must win the ball by tackling or intercepting passes. When they do, they become the offensive team and can pass to the neutral player. Remind the players that the neutral cannot score so marking him or her will leave a shooter open. Rotate your players through the neutral

position.

World Cup

Create teams of three players and assign one player to be goalie. All of the teams play at once in the area immediately in front of the net. Play can extend as far out as the sidelines and as far back as centre. The object is to score a goal. If your team has the ball, you can score. If you do not, your job is to play defense and win the ball. Teams will discover very early that it is much easier to score if you spread out and move the ball. If the goalie saves a shot, he or she simply tosses the ball into an open spot and the play continues. If a team scores, they leave the playing field. When only one team is left, the round is over and that team is eliminated. The other teams come back out and play in the second round. Rules are the same. Play continues until until there are only two teams left. In this case, the first team to score wins the World Cup.

1v1+2

Create a 40x30 grid with cones. Put a coach at each of the long sides as neutral players. Place small nets at each of the other end. Split the team into two groups and assign a number to each player. There should be a corresponding

Drill progressions force players to adapt to new situations and incorporate new information into their game.

number on each team. When the number is called, one coach plays the ball into the area and the two players rush forward and

attempt to win the ball. The variation on this from a standard 1v1 is that the ball carrier can make a pass to the neutral coach, then run into space for a return pass. Encourage the players to create space using this give and go technique. When the players have mastered this, call two numbers to progress the game to 2v2. Players on the same team can pass to each other or to the coaches. Creating space by making runs off the ball is even more important in this scenario.



The Line Change Sheet

One of the most difficult jobs a coach has is managing the bench during a game. Ensuring every player gets an equal opportunity to play is a laudable goal, but it can drive you to distraction. Worst of all, if you fail in achieving equitable playing time, you are most likely going to find out about it the hard way. In the excitement of the game, it is easy to forget who's been on the whole game, who just came off, and who really needs to go on. Especially early in the season when your team is a jumble of names, numbers and faces, mistakes happen.

There is no sure-fire way to eliminate mistakes, and as discussed earlier in this manual, equal play is a virtual impossibility in a single game. However, using a line change form like the one illustrated below is a good way to track your substitute rotations during a particular game and, if kept on file, over a season.

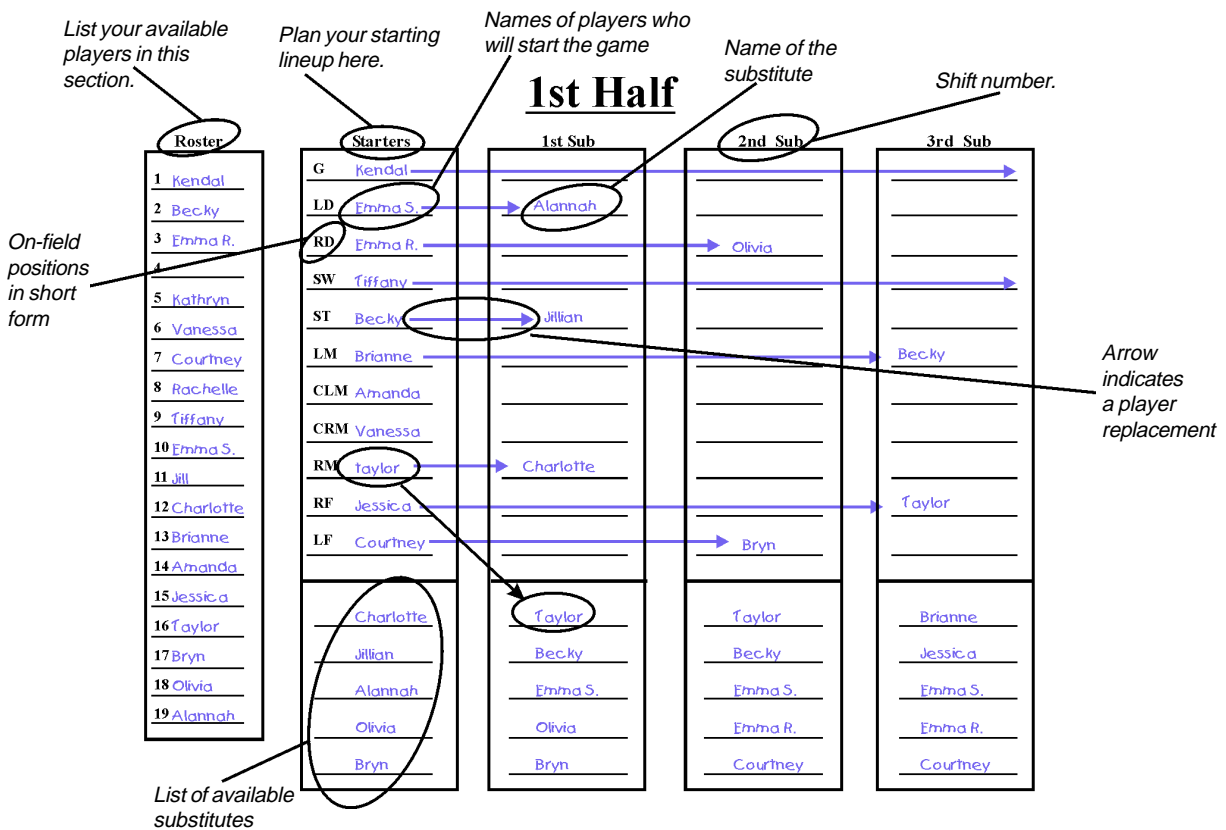
This form is just one idea, and a full-size version is included here for you to photocopy if you wish. It can be adapted for your needs or used as a model to create something more appropriate to your personal style. In summary, this tool allows you to list your whole roster on one side, set your starting line up, track your substitutes and determine who's due to come off. Using arrows, you

can determine at a glance if one player has been on too long, or is playing their proper position on the field. This reduces the chance that one player will see action for the entire game, while another will rot on the bench because they are too timid to speak up.

If you fail in achieving equitable playing time, you are most likely going to find out about it the hard way

It will also give you a quick reference to see who started the game before and who came off the bench. This way you can ensure every player gets the experience of starting a game and of joining the play mid-way through the half.

Using a system will cut down on accidental inequities, and give you a reference point should a parent complain. What it will not do, however, is protect you from intentional benching. Those will become glaringly obvious and will be up to you to explain.



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ST _____	ST _____	ST _____	ST _____
LM _____	LM _____	LM _____	LM _____
CLM _____	CLM _____	CLM _____	CLM _____
CRM _____	CRM _____	CRM _____	CRM _____
RM _____	RM _____	RM _____	RM _____
RF _____	RF _____	RF _____	RF _____
LF _____	LF _____	LF _____	LF _____
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