



Northeast United Premier Soccer Club
Player Development Manual
P.O. Box 387, Storrs, CT 06268

Introduction

It is the belief of this club that one key ingredient in the success of competitive team sporting endeavors is clear, consistent communication between coaches, players and parents. This document is one way of explaining in detail the expectations competitive soccer will place on you as a member of NEU. It will help clarify some areas of potential confusion and at the same time answer questions about the club and team's decision-making process. As you have committed to become a member of NEU, please take the time to carefully read this handbook.

The club and each team's success are dependent on a dedicated, knowledgeable and licensed collegiate, high school, and certified staff. The extent of each team's success depends on the work and dedication of the Players, Team Administrators, Parents, and the Coaches. Talented players alone will likely achieve minimal results. It takes a combination of talent, hard work, and a little luck.

Club Philosophy

We believe that putting our players in a competitive but fair training and game environment will accelerate their skills and learning process. We take this stance in the levels of competition we choose to engage in and also in the tournaments we attend.

We realize, acknowledge, and accept that the learning curve is different for everyone and as coaching staff and an organization we will continue to do our best to give players the best opportunity to succeed and to learn. We do so while also realizing that sometimes difficulties and struggles will lead to greater learning and success.

NEU strives to attend tournaments that will challenge their teams to grow both individually but also as a team. Each tournament may serve a different purpose, some will be used to challenge the level of our players/teams, some will be used to display our talent to collegiate coaches, and some may be used to bond a team together. In every case, each tournament provides a new and challenging task for each team.

As a club we believe in playing possession-style soccer while emphasizing speed of play, technique, tactics, support, and balance in all aspects of the game. We believe in developing the imagination and love of the game of our younger players, building and instilling the technical and tactical aspects of the game into our young-early adolescent players, and challenging our older teenage players to play the game at a high level of speed and competence.

Chain of Communication

We know that during the course of the year, everyone may see things that may not seem right or may seem unfair to your child or other members of the club. We want you to make us aware of your concerns so that we can correct them, or at the very least, offer an explanation. Based on years of experience, we have established a means of handling these issues effectively and efficiently. **Parents are asked to strictly adhere to the following NEU Chain of Communication**

First Step:

Discuss with the Manager- The manager can often answer many questions for you regarding the team's procedures, paperwork, plans, tournaments, fees, deadlines, etc. However, the manager's job is not to answer for coaching decisions- those questions and others concerning on field situations and team goals/ideas should be taken up with the Head Coach. Manager's emails will be posted on the website, and they will distribute contact information at the beginning of each season.

Second step:

Discuss with the Coach. This may not always be easy, but it must be the next step. Follow up your communication with an email. Coach's emails are listed on the website.

Third Step:

Discuss with the **appropriate Director of Coaching**. Follow up your communication with an email. Directors of Coaching will be listed on the website with their corresponding phone numbers and email addresses.

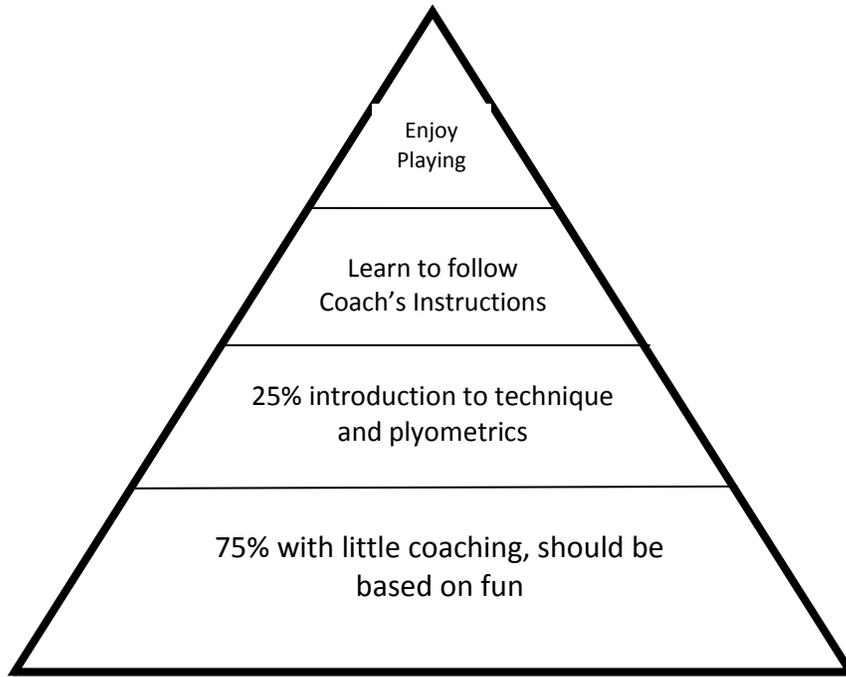
Final step:

Discuss with or email the **Club President**. The Club President is listed on the website.

Pyramid of Player Development

Phase 1 — Foundation (U7/8)

Expectations of Players In A No Excuses Environment



Plyometrics is a type of exercise training designed to produce fast, powerful movements, and improve the functions of the nervous system.

Development of individual skills — individual and small group tactics

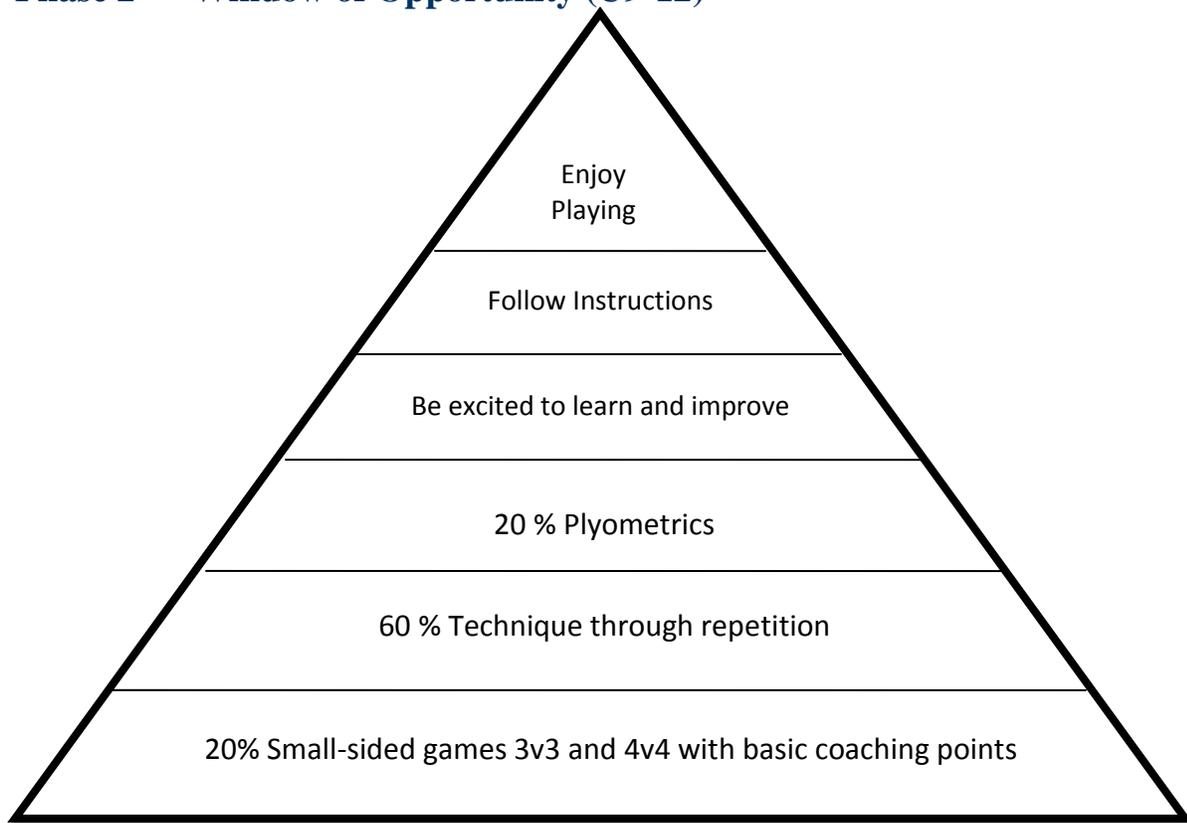
The effect of the role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams and players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. This is a time of transition from self-centered to self-critical. Players of this age have a high arousal level in relation to the training of basic skills.

This is the "golden age of learning" and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best "by doing". This is also an important time to introduce and teach the basic principles of play. It is important to establish discipline—both behavioral and technical, from the beginning.

Coach must be: A sensitive teacher, enthusiastic, encouraging, possess soccer awareness, ability to demonstrate or utilize someone who can demonstrate such as an older player or an assistant coach, knowledge of the key factors of basic skills.

At the younger age groups we are less worried about specific positions for the player. Each player should have a good level of understanding of each position and the roles required in each spot.

Phase 2 — Window of Opportunity (U9-12)



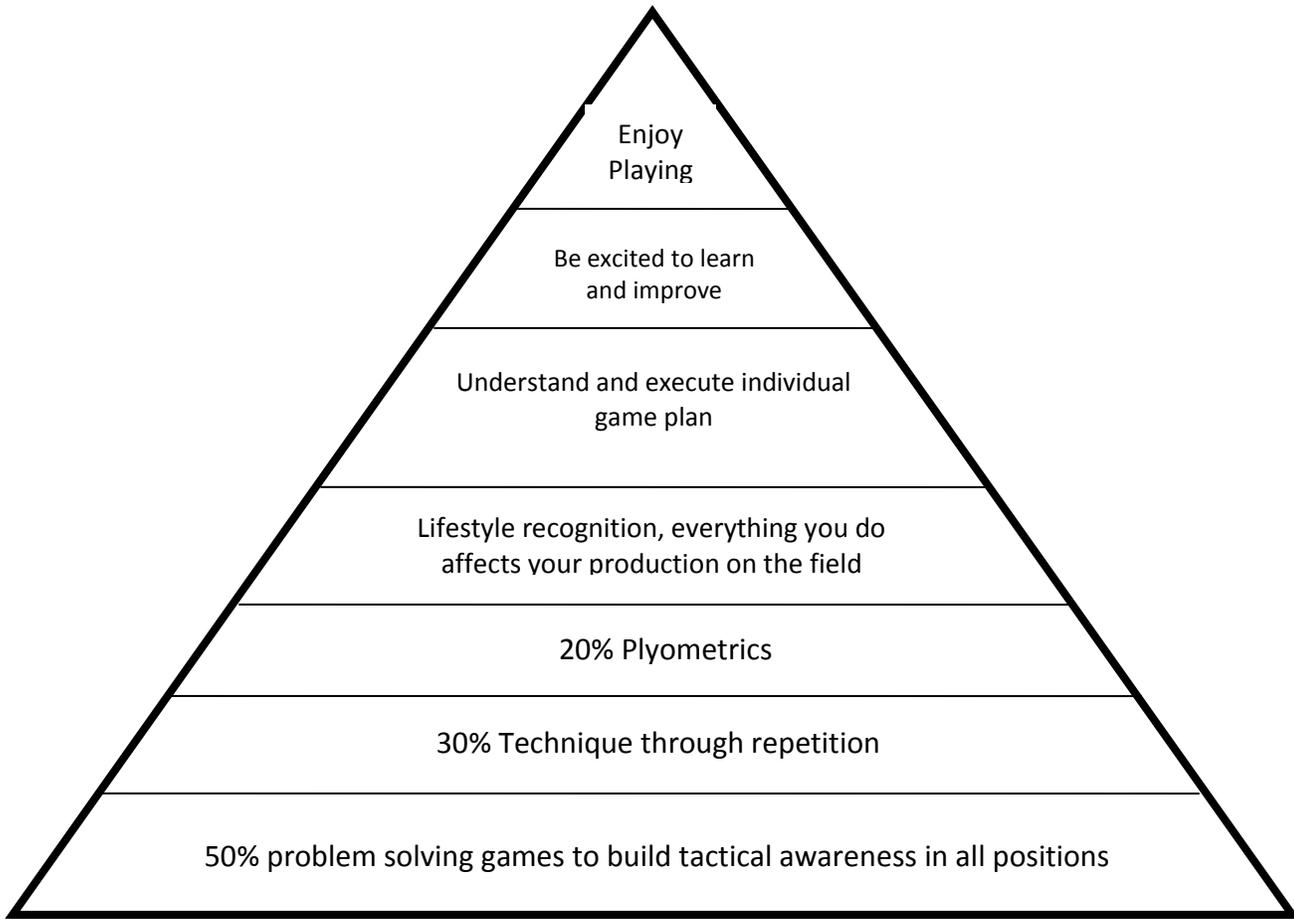
Development of individual skills — individual and small group tactics

Adult standards and formal rules become applicable. The pace of development quickens at this time due to the acceleration of physical and mental maturation. The demands of skill training as well as training loads should increase, thus provoking improvement with mental toughness, concentration and diligence.

Awareness of tactics within the game becomes an important facet of the learning process. Players tend to be self-critical and rebellious, but have a strong commitment to the team.

Coach must be: A strong personality with possessing soccer knowledge. The coach should be enthusiastic and patient but demanding.

Phase 3 — Preparation (U13/14)



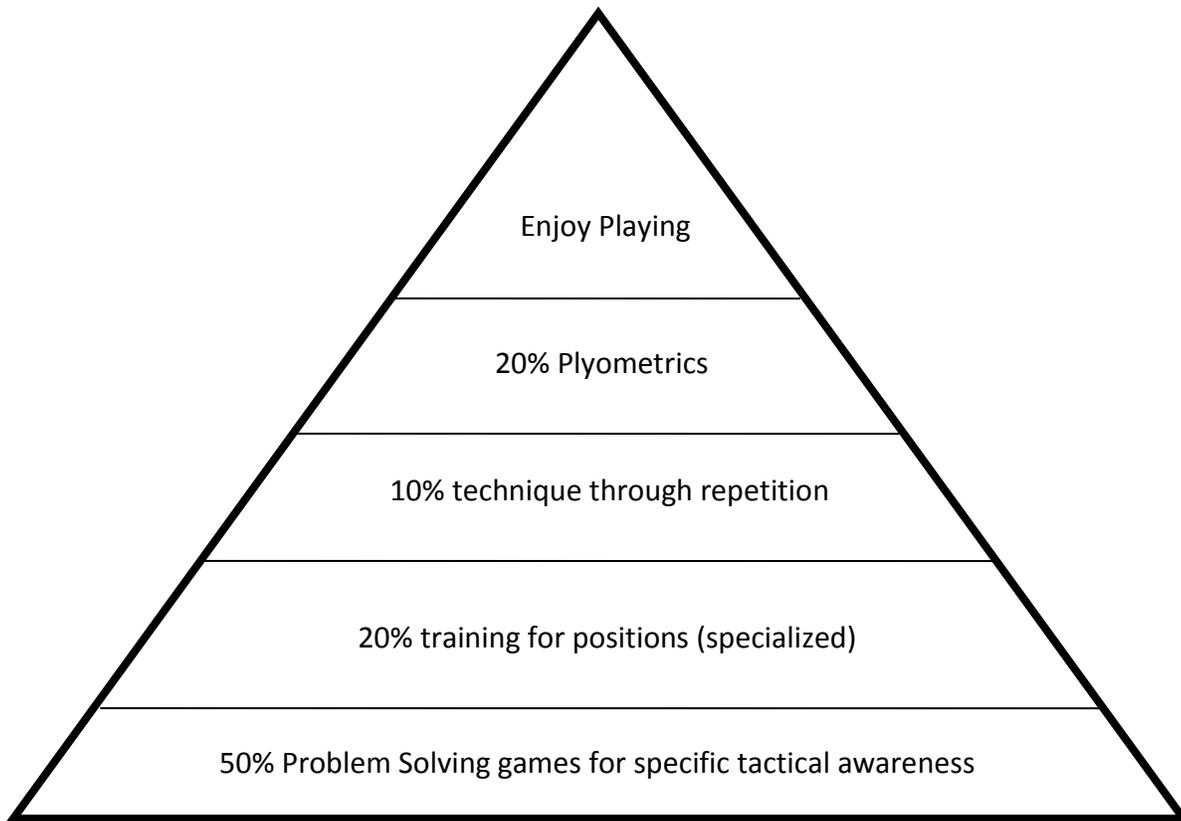
Development of individual skills — individual, group and team tactics

This is a critical time in the player's development. Many stop playing due to other interests, lack of success, shortage of playing opportunities, poor leadership or other reasons. Players tend to lack mental toughness and self-confidence. They tend to be self-critical and struggle with their desire to be competitive or need to be more competitive.

There is a need for attention and security. There should be a great focus on team spirit, leadership and discipline within the team.

Coach must be: Charismatic, experienced, knowledgeable, articulate, a disciplinarian, possess managerial know-how, a thoughtful persuader.

Phase 4 — Dedication (U15/16)



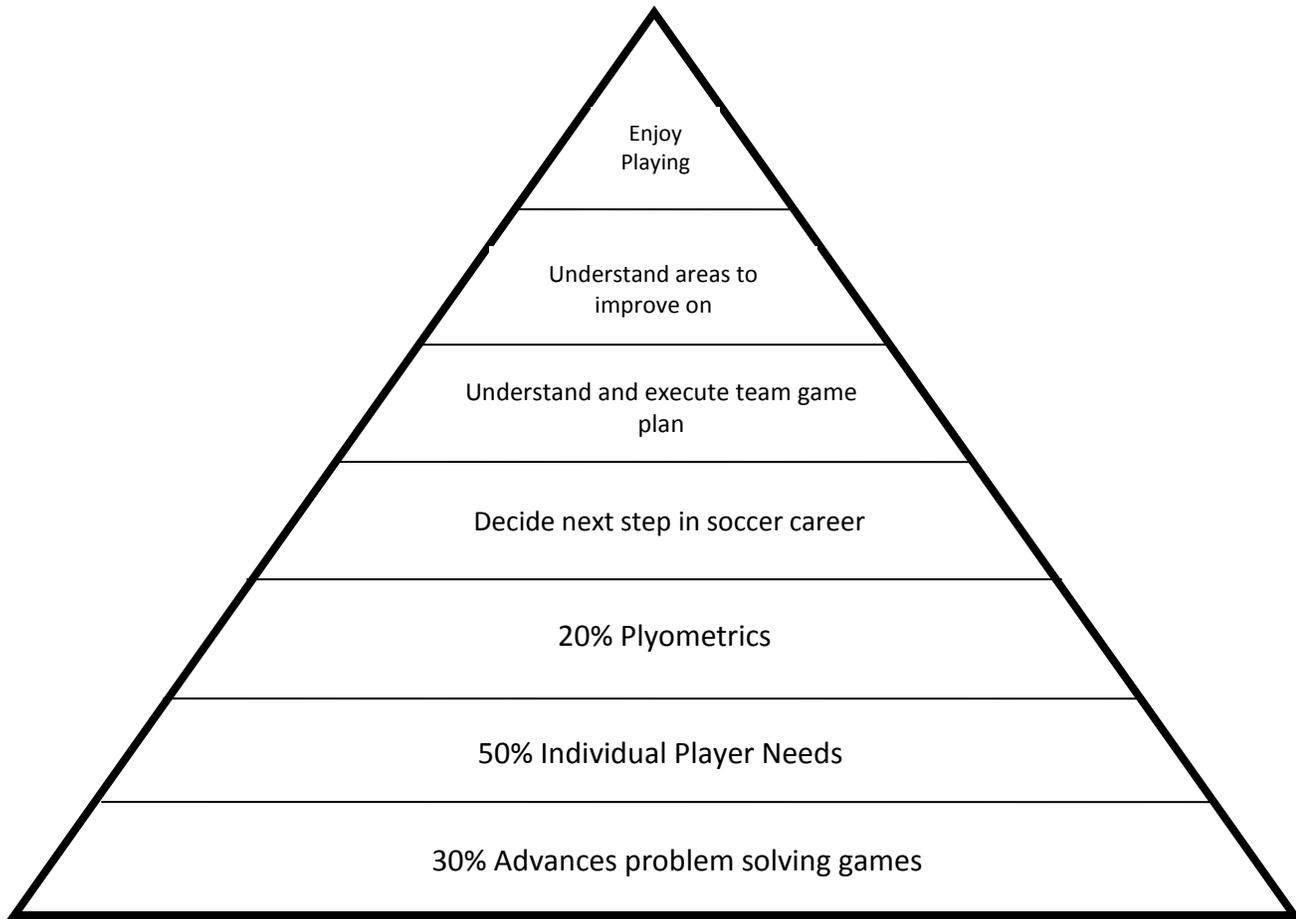
Development of functional and team play

Fulfillment of a player's potential depends on the player's own efforts, the support of teammates and the unselfish guidance of the player's coach. The player must be exposed to a playing and training environment, which extends their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to the limit.

Players must have a sound understanding of the game's principles and concepts. Players should show emotional stability when confronted with pressure situations. Demanding and challenging training sessions and matches are a must.

Coach must be: Charismatic, well informed, up to date, experienced, knowledgeable, articulate, a disciplinarian, authoritative, and possess managerial know-how.

Phase 5 — Excellence (U17-19)



Development of functional and team play

Fulfillment of a player's potential depends on the player's own efforts, the support of teammates and the unselfish guidance of the player's coach. Player's must be exposed to a playing and training environment, which extends their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to the limit. He or she must have a sound understanding of the game's principles and concepts.

Players should show emotional stability when confronted with pressure situations. Demanding and challenging training sessions and matches are a must.

Coach must be: Charismatic, well informed, up to date, experienced, knowledgeable, articulate, a disciplinarian, authoritative and possess managerial know-how.

Position Specific Functional Roles

Goalkeeper:

- Communication
- Bravery
- Concentration
- Shot stopping
- Commanding in the air
- Positional awareness
- Decision making
- Good distribution

Outside Defenders (Right and Left Backs)

- Speed (short, medium and long distances)
- Ability to get up and down the field
- Knowledge of correct covering distance for Center Back
- Strong in the tackle
- Ability to get forward and deliver cross
- Must be able to defend back post when ball on opposite side

Center Defenders

- Communication
- Leadership
- Comfortable on ball
- Good in air
- Strong in the tackle
- Good range of passing
- Positional and tactical awareness
- Speed (short, medium and long distances)

Center Midfielders (Defensive and Attacking)

- Can use both feet
- Ability to run with the ball
- Quality passing and control
- Strong in the tackle
- Understanding when to rotate, step and delay
- Speed (short, medium and long distances)
- Be creative
- Ability to get forward at the right time and score goals

Outside Midfielders

- Speed (short, medium and long distances)
- Ability to run with ball and beat players
- Skill (fakes, feints) and know when/where to use them
- Know when to give width and play narrow
- Transition quickly (offense to defense and defense to offense)
- Ability to create and score goals
- Quality passing and control
- Must be able to deliver a quality cross

High Forward (Furthest player forward)

- Speed (short, medium and long distances)
- Ability to run with the ball and beat a player
- Good in the air
- Good work rate
- First line of defense
- Quality passing and first touch
- Ability to score goals with both feet and head
- Quality of finishing technique

Withdrawn Forward (Player behind high forward)

- Ability to link up play from midfield to forward
- Quick enough to get in behind defense
- Always in a position to receive ball on the half turn
- Good awareness of where all players are all the time
- Good agility
- Be able to create opportunities for oneself and others
- Ability to score goals with both feet and head
- Decision making in finishing choices

Team Organization

Coach

NEU is responsible for providing the players and teams with an experienced technical staff. Some of our coaches have had very distinguished playing and coaching careers. Coaching assignments will be based on individual coach's experience and the team's age, gender and level of competition. All teams will have designated Head Coaches at the start of the club year. All coaching staff report directly to the Directors of Coaching (DOCs) and the DOCs report directly to the president and Board of Directors.

Coaches are expected to serve as teachers and leaders whose attitudes and behavior will set the tone for the players and the sideline.

In addition to the above applicable standards, coaches are expected to:

- Live up to communication standard
- Set high standards for their players' conduct and attendance as well as their own conduct and attendance
- Treat all players honestly, fairly and with respect
- Be committed to help all players reach their maximum potential
- Refrain from releasing players from the team during a soccer season unless it is for disciplinary reasons or non-payment of team dues and fees
- Conduct themselves as positive role models and display appropriate behavior at all team and club functions
- Be responsible for the conduct of the team on and off the field when the team is together as part of a team event, including parents as well
- Conform to the rules established by the team and the club

Tryouts – Dates are released by NEU annually and will be posted on website as soon as they are made ready.

Coach Evaluation

Prior to or during the December break (**March for HS teams**), the club asks players and parents to participate in a coach's evaluation online at the NEU website. The sources of input are confidential and we encourage parents and players to participate. This is a critical way for NEU to improve our coaching staff. This gives the DOCs an opportunity to analyze players' and parents' satisfaction with their coaches.

Player Evaluation

The player evaluation is a formal communication between the player and the coach. The club provides coaches with some guidelines to follow suggesting that more information provided in a thoughtful manner is best, but as with most communications, coaches may approach this differently.

Player evaluations serve an important role in determining the following year's placement process. Any player who is unhappy with an evaluation should discuss the details with the coach at to be sure of his or her position on the team. If a player thinks they might be on the cusp it is incumbent on the player to

ask the coach the appropriate questions. Players should feel encouraged to always be active in their communication with their coach about their role and responsibilities with the team and where they stand as it pertains to the team's goals and objectives.

It is often difficult for parents to accept that their child may be on the cusp. A parent is encouraged to meet with the coach to discuss what their player can do to improve and what the expectations for their player might be going forward into the future. Solutions might be to send the player to extra training sessions, which may improve the player's skill level, but may or may not improve it enough to keep a position on the team.

Parents

Parents are not only supporters of their sons and/or daughters they also are role models whose actions reflect on and influence the player, the team and the club. NEU parents are expected to:

- Remember that the game is for your player, not for you
- See to it that players attend all possible team functions such as practices, games and meetings. Help your player meet these obligations
- Set an example of good and fair conduct and good sportsmanship
- Allow the coach to direct the play of the game
- Be your child's biggest fan – win, lose or draw
- Remember that in five hours or five years little will be remembered of the score of the game or who the winner was
- Remember that your child's soccer career is a long term growth process and not an end unto itself
- Contribute meaningful communication, planning and understanding in order to avoid or minimize conflicts
- Take the initiative to teach your child to speak up and communicate for themselves
- Conform to the rules established by the team, the coach and the club
- Get your player to the field on time
- Provide guidance on sleep, rest, and good eating habits before, between, and after games

Parents play a critical role in all facets of their child's development. NEU encourages you to support your child's interest in the game in a manner that supports the spirit of sport and fair play. For the purposes of this club and the positive impact you can have on your child's experience, NEU would like you to consider the following recommendations:

Communicate responsibly and in the spirit of the game

- Be your child's best fan and support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw your love when your child performs below their standard
- On transporting your child home, please be supportive and always place primary focus on the positive aspects of their game
- Parents must not coach from the sideline during matches and training
- Refrain from criticizing your child's performance — rely on the coach to offer constructive criticism in support of your child's development
- If you find yourself unhappy with the coach you should approach the coach privately to discuss the problem. Negative communication without going to the source is often destructive to the team and the players, your best option would be to privately discuss the issue with the coach.

- Support all the players on your child's team, do not criticize any player
- Do not criticize the opponents, their parents, coaches or the referee

Nurture Independence and Responsibility

- Make it your child's responsibility to pack their own uniform in their soccer bag, to clean their soccer cleats and to bring their own water bottle
- If it is appropriate, please have your child communicate directly with the coach about issues, concerns, conflicts or simply missing upcoming practices or games
- Players should be reminded to take responsibility for their own performance and to not place blame on others
- Allow your child the freedom to practice with his or her team without your active presence and evaluation. If you must stay at the field, please find something else to do. You will provide your child with another opportunity to behave independently of your scrutiny
- This "responsibility taking" is a significant part of maturing. Your child's handling of these tasks on and off the field complete his "ownership" of all aspects of being a soccer player

NEU Players are expected to:

- Conform to the rules established by the Head Coach of your individual team
- Maintain a positive individual attitude and support a positive team attitude
- Maintain a high level of physical and mental conditioning
- Strengthen and/or improve individual skills outside of regular training
- Demonstrate exemplary sportsmanship
- Report any injury to the Head Coach
- Respect the coach, manager, referee, opponent and the game
- Approach your head coach personally with any soccer-related problem
- Adhere to the laws of the game
- Take victory modestly and defeat graciously

NEU Players Will Not:

- Engage in dissent towards an official
- Use profane or vulgar language
- Leave any team function without notifying the Head Coach

Practice and Field Rules

- When you report to a training session be mentally and physically ready to perform
- Report to training sessions early enough to allow you to prepare your uniform, water, etc. so that training may begin on time
- Training officially begins when the coach starts the warm-up
- You will be required to keep the field neat and free of training related garbage you may be responsible for
- During matches you are required to maintain a professional attitude on the sideline. This includes remaining seated on the sideline unless otherwise instructed by the Head Coach. Comments should be kept to a minimum and reserved for positive reinforcement or congratulations and support. "Trash talking" from the sidelines will not be tolerated.

- You are required to remain with the team until dismissed by the Head Coach or otherwise excused. This includes injury related instances.
- The Head Coach is the "Person in Charge" hence; all questions should be directed to him or her.