**East Select Soccer**

**U9 & U10 Jamboree Philosophy**

Thank you for your interest in East Select Soccer (ESS) and the jamboree program offered through the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association (MYSA). Prior to signing up for this program please read and understand the ESS philosophy and plans for our teams at this level.

* Philosophy

The biggest problem facing competitive youth soccer in our state is the “win at all costs” mentality at the younger ages that so many of the clubs in the state have taken. While they tout their winning percentage and use this as a recruiting tool for other players, they do this at the expense of skill development. As a result, you will often see the top teams at U9/10 struggling as U12 & U13 players when the field gets bigger and skill becomes more and more important. Those clubs are then often wondering; “what happened?”

Simply put, it is very easy to win at U9/10. You throw your most creative two players up to forward and you tell your other players to defend the goal and smash the ball up the field to those two kids who are physically more gifted at their age. These two will inevitably score a few goals while the rest of the team defends the net. What you end up with is two kids that don’t know how to defend and the rest of the team that does not have the skill to compete as they get older.

At ESS we simply do not care about results at these age levels. While it is nice to win and gain confidence at this age, it is not the focus of our jamboree teams. At this age, our focus has always been, and always will be, skill development. It is so much easier to teach a player at this age proper technique in shooting and passing, creativity with and without the ball, defensive footwork and ball control then it is to try to teach a 14-year-old these same skills. If we are able to teach these skills and concepts at a young age, it will correlate into success in future years and an advanced understanding and skill set that will allow us to compete with the largest clubs in the state. We have proven our ability to do this over time by following this philosophy.

In order for this philosophy to truly work it takes time for our coaches to build a working understanding of how to teach each kid. Please be patient as we teach your kids both, new skills and new rules that will differ from what they are used to in rec soccer. Both the skills that are being taught and the introduction to new rules do take time for the players to learn and mistakes will happen along this learning process.

* Practices

When you get your practice schedule, you will notice that U9 and U10 players will have practice lengths of between one hour and one hour and fifteen minutes. This is the optimal practice time to best utilize their energy and attention span. Practices longer than this become a struggle for the players to focus and grasp new concepts.

If you attend a practice, which is completely fine, you will notice a common theme, that the kids will be getting constant touches on the ball. It is our goal to have each kid get hundreds of touches on the ball before warm-ups are finished. Gone are the days of “run a lap and stretch”. You will see what looks like games being played but the games are designed to teach ball manipulation, proper technique and creativity in a fun and enjoyable setting. These are skills that are easily developed at a young age and if they are not developed while the player is young, they are difficult to teach and coach at older ages where habits have already been formed.

* Team Concepts

Basic team concepts will be developed at this age; concepts like passing and moving into spaces, proper defending techniques for single and multiple defenders, and positional responsibilities.

We will not be teaching “plays” at this age as a lot of the players are just developing the skills needed to successfully run things like corner kick plays or free kick plays. These types of soccer ideas will be taught at the older levels as kids will have the skills needed to have success with the more detailed parts of the game.

* Games/Tournaments

As a member of a jamboree team, your child will be entitled to 50% play time in a game. This is obviously assuming that your son/daughter is an active participant at practice and positively contributing to the attitude of the team. This does not mean that each kid will get equal playing time as certain positions require more running than others and kids endurance and heat acclimatization levels vary greatly at this age. Additionally, it is not uncommon for injuries, vacations or other conflicts to arise during the season so your player may be asked to play additional games with other teams within ESS if a situation like this comes up.

Teams will participate in four scheduled jamborees, two in Duluth and two in the Twin Cities area. These are considered jamborees as there are no scores or standings that are being kept so there will be no tournament champion but rather participation awards. In addition, teams may also do local scrimmages or games as they fit into the schedule. Both ESS and hosting tournaments attempt to place teams in appropriate skill levels for bracketing but this is not always possible with every tournament.

If you have any questions or concerns about the East Select Soccer jamboree philosophy please feel free to contact me and I will be happy to go into further detail. Thank you for your interest and participation in East Select Soccer

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