

## Soccer Tryouts Season: Three Days of Soccer Chaos

Did your child make the team they wanted? If so, that is great! Congratulations to them!

If not, how did they feel about the situation? How did you feel as a parent?

Let's talk about the soccer tryout process.

Tryouts are a rite of passage for many kids in any sport. It gives them the opportunity to be an alpha male or female within a group of their peers. It is a chance to see the fight or flight response. Their time to show off what they have learned from the previous season or the countless hours they have spent with a personal trainer or on their own, building their strength, conditioning and ball skills.

It is also a time when parents can kill the spirit of the game for the child or use this time as a life lesson moment. As a soccer coach and a father, I always have to walk a fine line about how I rate my sons to other athletes at their level. This time of the year in our house we are constantly going over the realities of where they may stand and the shoulda, coulda, woulda of the the past.

Here are a few things to remember as a soccer parent when on the soccer field during tryouts. These are key reminders that will keep your child loving the game for years to come. Parental tips on how to build up your child properly to be the adult we all want our children to be.

Reality Check

**Be honest with yourself, as the parent, where your athlete stands among their peers.**

Don't try and live your past through your children. It is unfair to place so much pressure on a child during this time. This is their time to learn to stand on their own two feet and know that you will be there when they fall. Your sole job during this time is to encourage them to be their best. It is not the time to remind them where they failed during their tryouts and why they will be placed on the lowest team, by your standards.

Let's break down the days of the soccer tryouts so that you are better prepared when you step onto the pitch.

## DAY 1

The first day is the day of first impressions. It is the day that is the most packed with soccer players looking for a new soccer club. It may be the day new families whom have just moved into town can come out and see what is being offered in terms of sports. Most clubs will concentrate on technical skills and 1v1 games. The most confident of athletes will stand out in this arena. There is no place to hide during these events.

As a parent, start the day by giving your player their space in terms of allowing them to mentally prepare for the day ahead. Breakfast is a protein packed dish. This allows their body to prepare for the rigors of the first day of tryouts. As the day progresses, their lunch will range from an enhanced smoothie created to hydrate their body and keep their mental focus on the job at hand. Dinner should always be foods that will replenish their lost nutrients. Some players walk away from the soccer field drinking a bottle of chocolate milk – it is a very good recovery drink. Studies have shown time and time again that chocolate milk is just as good as overly priced commercial recovery drinks.

As we head to the soccer field, we speak words of encouragement into their spirits. We discuss how proud we are of them no matter what happens. We go over how much water to drink within a period of time so that they won't drink too much and cramp up, or worse yet, throw up.

We also go over the reality of the tryout situation and that it is the time where their friends are also their competition. I firmly believe that the highest respect you can give another athlete, especially a friend, is good competition. You are doing no one any favors by going easy on them or vice versa.

Soccer coaches are there to see what your child can do on their own. My suggestion to you is to drop them off and walk away – let them be. This first impression will dictate Day 2.

## DAY 2

This day will bring about the day of small sided games in which coaches get to see your child play as part of a team. Remember when I said that first impressions are important? Well, day two is no different. At the end of this night they will be placed in the top, middle, or lower groups going into day three.

The conversation regarding this day, is about communication both visual and verbal. We tell our children that we need to be able to hear them no matter where on the field. You know your child's specific voice patterns. If you can't hear them demanding the ball, giving verbal cues to push or pull then they may not be having the time of their life on the pitch.

As a coach, I am looking for how the player reacts to being placed in a situation where he/she is playing with kids he may not know. **Does he step up to the plate and become a leader or will he try and find a hiding spot.** By the end of the night we are running a full sided game to end the night. Is the player versatile. What do I mean by that? Well, if I go up to your son and tell them to play Fullback then the last thing I want to hear them say is that they ONLY play Forward. You can't understand how much this irks coaches. I don't care if you have never played that position, **it is the idea that you have been given a challenge – are you coachable? Are you willing to step in there and learn something new?** A well versed

coach will see in the first couple of touches of the ball whether you can play in the position or not, but the fact remains that you either took on the challenge or not.

### DAY 3

For the most part, a decision on where your child will fall was made the first two days. This day is more for the coaches.

Did they make the right decisions in terms of player placement?

Is the coach satisfied with the team created?

Coaches are constantly writing down notes, one coach may have seen a player you may have overlooked, and they will share notes. The night is a series of full sided games evaluating players in their respective skill level teams. It will resemble a round robin of sorts. Coaches may shuffle players here and there from one team to another and back again. 24 hours later invitations are given and coaches want to be sure they have given the right invitations to the right players.

That night at home enjoy the night –talk about tryouts or anything they may have on their minds. Don't make the mistake of going over where they came up short. Do go over how proud you are of them. Turn the experience into a life lesson. The last thing they want to hear is that they would have made a certain team if they only...

Don't be the parent that goes ballistic over an invitation to a lower level team. At the end of the day – your son or daughter plays for the club or school, not the specific team. If you feel your child was incorrectly placed on a team, my suggestion would be to not accept the invitation right away. Go home and give yourself some time to reflect on what you saw. If you still feel the same, then request a time to speak to the team coach. Explain your side and let them explain theirs. Never be the parents that demands your child be moved to the top team because you have "plans". Every club should let decisions to be made by the player or parent within 24-48 hours. If they are forcing you to sign a commitment before you leave the field, then I would politely decline their offer.

Enjoy the tryout season!