



To: All coaches in the Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Juniors Program.

We want to remind you against assigning defenders or "no-hands goalies" at Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade or 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade games. Newton Girls Soccer has implemented Small Sided Games Rules as recommended by US Soccer for the benefit of developing better soccer players. The section of the rules describing the absence of Goalkeepers in these age groups from US Soccer Association is as follows:

"There are no goalkeepers in the Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade age groups so that all of the players may chase the ball around the field. The kids want to be where the action is and at this age it is around the ball. This will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their running, jumping and kicking coordination. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. The smaller number of players takes into account the egocentrism of this age group and therefore allows each child more opportunities for shooting, passing and dribbling the ball. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeated game situations frequently. The involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates."

In short, **Newton Girls Soccer encourages more running, more touches, and lots of goal scoring opportunities in these age groups.** This cannot be accomplished with "no hands goalies" or assigned defenders. We are **not** recommending the total absence of defense. It is equally important to teach all players to be involved in offense when their team has the ball and then revert to getting it back when they don't, but assigning a defender does not help the attacking team let alone the player assigned to be a defender thereby taking them out of the action.

We promote the concept of Fair Play in all age groups. As coaches, your decisions will not only affect your team, but can also have an influence on the development of the opposing team as well. We believe that by following these recommendations it will benefit all players on both sides of the ball.

### **Some Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:**

**Q.** I have never assigned a player to stay back in defense, let alone stand in front of the goal. But, when the other team is attacking or--for example--if they have a corner, the players will often guard the goal. Is this acceptable? About once a season, I have heard an opposing coach (or more often a parent) complaining about us having a goalie.

Could you clarify?

**A.** The answer lies between developing the players and promoting Fair Play. It is common to have players that want to stand right in front of the goal on a corner kick. Encourage them instead to go out a few steps and guard a player. That teaches the defensive player the concept of potentially intercepting a pass and allows the other team a fair chance to score should they miss. Also, during a fast break the defensive team may have players whose first inclination is to run straight to the goal. Again, encourage them to go directly towards the attacker who has the ball to attempt a steal or at the very least, slow them down. This also provides the dribbler an obstacle to get around. These situations allow both players, offense and defense, the opportunity to

develop soccer related skills. While standing in front of a small goal will prevent the other team from scoring, it teaches little if any soccer skills to the stander and only frustrates the shooter.

**Q.** Isn't assigning defenders or no-hands goalies O.K. because it's a way of teaching kids good positioning?

**A.** In these ages positioning is not in the top set of skills these players need most. But if you must, we would recommend teaching positioning in relation to the opposing player (guarding on a kick in, getting in front of the dribbler, etc.) instead of the location on the field.

**Q.** We do not allow our players to stand directly in front of the goal, but what we have been doing is having one player keep his distance from the scrum in order to play the ball back in front of the opposing goal, or to stop an opposing player from having a fast break shot at our goal. Can we continue to do this?

**A.** What we really want for the kids in these age groups is to provide an environment that will: 1) allow kids to really learn to love soccer and 2) teach them the basics of soccer - like running, dribbling, etc. Both of those aspirations are severely hampered when the opposing team has assigned defenders or "no-hands goalies". It's more so with no-hands goalies than with assigned defenders but it has the same effect of preventing goals. Kids love it when they or their teammates score - it makes the game fun. And being able to teach the players to dribble out of traffic, down the field and reach success at the end is vital in developing soccer players.