

# Referee Notes for the Under 8 Game

Fall 2004

Montclair Soccer Club

Week 1

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## **Some Words about Refereeing from Matt Corley, September 16, 2004**

(Matt is a U8 coach, referee coordinator and soccer dad in the Montclair Soccer Club)

This is the first Under 8 Referee Notes for the Fall 2004 season. We anticipate questions each week about refereeing and game control, and these U8 Referee Notes are designed to address some of the questions we receive. From U8s to World Cup level, referee questions continually arise. So remember to bear in mind that soccer is an imprecise art form - and we hope that it always stays that way.

Remind your parents that the volunteer parent referees that are officiating the game are usually just beginning as referees, and are trying hard to get it right and keep it fair and safe. At this introductory level to the game some misunderstandings and misinterpretations about the rules are bound to occur. Roll with it during the games. And, let us know afterward if there's a problem that we can address here or in some other format. (By the way, I don't have a free pass or diplomatic immunity either.)

## **Week 1 : Body Mass and Offsides**

Let's clarify calling fouls and calling offside. The role of the referee in U-8's is often to fill in the gap between what the players have learned so far in practice, and what actually happens during the game.

### **Body Mass**

It's important that the referee maintain some level of verbal contact with the players in a friendly way. Most fouls can be prevented this way and it is better to keep the game moving than to be constantly blowing the whistle. Intent is an issue in calling fouls at higher levels, but result is more applicable in calling fouls at the U8s. Arms outstretched from the body tend to generate fouls. If you watch them long enough, they will eventually push or elbow somebody, and these should be called.

You can help prevent the fouls (and handballs) by continuing to remind the players to keep their arms down. If the arms are down, many types of body contact are allowed as long as the initiator of the contact is going for the ball and not being overly aggressive or dangerous in any matter. This is a judgment call. Generally, err on the side of safety and game control when deciding if you want to blow the whistle. Remember that soccer is a little more like basketball than baseball when it comes to player contact, and you can keep the play going at this level with timely verbal inputs.

With regards to the legs - if it's something other than the ball that they are kicking, you probably have a foul situation. If it's one those U8 scrums with about half the team all engaged at once it will be very hard to tell who is fouling who. If you don't like what you see or you're worried about safety, call for a drop ball. A drop ball is the proper restart for simultaneous fouls that are similar in severity.

Finally, don't be shy about protecting goalies - even if it is your team that is about to score. This is very important!! These players are highly vulnerable when going for the ball. At this young age group, the goalie is considered to have control of the ball with as little as one finger on the ball (called "one finger possession"). That is, as soon the goalie

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has one finger on the ball, don't let anyone kick or run into a goalie. Please, protect the goalie.

## **Offsides**

In general, we should not be calling offside at this age group. Most U8 leagues do not call it under any circumstances. For our U8s, the only offside that we should call would be the unusual case where a player was clearly well behind the defense (say nearly half the pitch), and parked all alone near the goal and then received a pass from a teammate, controlled the pass, and was able to fire off a basically uncontested shot on goal. That would be a grand achievement for a U-8 player and probably well worth watching.

The only reason we mention it at all is that in the past there have been deliberate abuses when coaches were advised that we would not be calling offside. We're looking for fair play. Very few U8 players would even be able to take advantage of an offside anyway. So, it remains a judgment call. If you are going to call offsides, make sure that the offside is very, very obvious and that the offside would basically result in an uncontested shot on goal before blowing the whistle.