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## **FOOTWORKS REPORT FOR WALLKILL VALLEY RECREATION SOCCER JUNE 10, 2017**

### **Introduction:**

First, I would like to thank Dave Van Ginneken, President and Director of Coaching for WVRS, for his interest and agreeing to participate in the NJYS Footworks. As I stated in our agreement, the purpose was to introduce the Footworks process while providing some feedback and consultation on how to improve the existing recreation soccer programming at the club.

Coach Van Ginneken, is a supporter of youth soccer and its benefits for children. Apart from running a class Recreation Soccer program he also runs a TOPSoccer Program. He is fully vested in the philosophy of developing the child, athlete and player as well as promoting coaching education having held numerous NJYS "F" and TOPSoccer courses! His organization is a true volunteer organization that reimburses coaches for attending these courses. The clubs mission statement on their web site spells it out clearly- *since 1980, the Wallkill Valley Recreation Soccer Club (WVRS) mission is to provide a well-organized recreation soccer appropriately structured to accommodate any level of play commensurate with our players individual ability, potential, and interest and promote a positive youth sports culture that teaches life lessons for all players in the Hardyston, Hamburg and Franklin NJ area. Our organization believes it starts with quality coaches who are passionate, supportive and exemplary role models of sportsmanship. Thus, we are committed to ongoing training and mentoring of our volunteers.*

The following recommendations were developed from having observed several games pertaining to the recreation program on Saturday, June 10, 2017. We were unable to observe the training sessions that went on during the week prior to the game but the day was sufficient to identify some trends, safety issues and reveal general strengths and weaknesses within the current recreation programming. Here are our recommendations to further improve your program. All the items listed below are methods for ensuring the safety, well-being of the players and improving the transfer of learning from training to games thereby improving the environment for skill acquisition.

## 1. Overall recommendations:

1. **Safety First!** Insist and hold *all* coaches (as well as inform parents) accountable to warn of the dangers prior to starting the day, call attention to any child hanging on goals.
2. Coach Van Ginneken was walking around listening and observing the coaches, a great idea to help develop coaches. Many were certainly engaged with the children but more enthusiasm was needed, and at times some U6 Coaches got in the way during the games and could have trampled on the children. Some tossed the ball up into the air to get the game going again, and some coaches over by the 9-10s allowed the GKs to punt.
3. **Excellent job!** The fields were organized, plenty of balls however many of the children had to wait for the coach to get things started. Maybe have a set “club warm up” that all coaches must organize and implement before the game. Warm ups were quite varied from no warm up to a line 10 deep waiting to take shots.
4. Use Pugg nets for the U6 Programs as the current aluminum 4x6s are a bit dangerous and big for the little players in this age group.

The rest of the report is broken down into the following sections: 2. Complex and fields; 3. Observations of training sessions (not applicable); and 4. Observations of games. This information can hopefully be used by the Club to improve some aspects of the organization and for the coaches to self-reflect. It was apparent that most of your coaches are committed to the players’ well-being and have a great rapport with the players. This shows the club does a decent job of recruiting decent and caring coaches.

## 2. Complex and fields:

- The Hardyston Township Sports and Recreation Complex on Wheatsworth Road, offers suitable parking, and wide-open field space that is well lined out for all age groups and small sided formats. The total grass complex is clean and well maintained; the field surface is amendable to a learning and playing style that is commensurate with the goals of the Footworks process. Coach Dave has appropriately mapped out all the fields. Coaches have plenty of options and flexibility for scheduling training and match play.
- The complex has clean and suitable bathrooms, a shed that houses equipment and a concession stand. There are adequate trash receptacles placed throughout the complex.
- Coaches have easy access to several various aluminum portable goal sizes –from 4x6s to full regulation size. We recommend the use of these small 4x6 Bownets, or PUGG goals for the U6 Little Kickers program as the aluminum 4x6s being used were too big and also dangerous for this age group. While the grass fields are ideal, having a sand pit, kicking wall and double-sided goals are also important tools for teaching goalkeeping, playing with both feet, ball control, shooting and passing, and are found at clubs all throughout the world!
- **Potential injury hazards: All goals were safely and securely anchored to the ground.** However, there were a few unused goals off to the side of the field that were not being used and could present a danger to curious children, and on two occasions I witnessed players (looked like the older brothers of the U6s) hanging on the 6x12 and 4x6 portable goals, and most of the adults and coaches ignored them – there was however one coach in the U6 Little Kickers program that did instruct a child on the on the danger of hanging on the goal.

**3. Observations of training sessions:**

No training sessions were observed during the week prior to the game day, but most teams depending on age train once or twice during the week. This will be scheduled at a future date.

It was obvious from speaking to Coach Van Ginneken, that a lot of organization goes into making sure all teams are as balanced in ability as possible and everything is set up and scheduled appropriately prior to the season commencing.

#### **4. Observations of the Matches:**

A few positive organizational things stood out: Players arrived on time before the games and quickly gathered with their teammates. Warm ups could have been more efficient and game like. The coaches did seem to get all the substitutes into the game but many were quickly substituted back out and not really allowed to get into the rhythm of the game in 9-10 and older players groups. The U6 group allowed for “split game” format and I did witness it working well but then later witnessed a 7v7 game where the coaches just had everyone on the same field playing while there was an empty field right next-door, empty. The field size for these guys in my opinion was too big 30x20 and recommend going to a 25x15. The 9-10-year-old group played 7v7, on appropriate size fields with the build out line rule and a 6x12 goal size which was suitable for these guys.

Once again, a few of the 9-10-year-old goalkeepers punted—the coaches should have stopped that immediately and encourage the children to roll it out to their teammates.

**Respectfully submitted by Rick Meana, New Jersey Youth Soccer, Director of Coaching, June 8, 2017**