



The Retreat Line

For 3rd/4th Grade & 5th/6th Grade Leagues

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East Side Soccer Retreat Line

What is the retreat line?

A retreat line is a line which comes into play when there is a goal kick or the goalkeeper has the ball in their hands. When either of these scenarios occur, the opposing team must drop back behind the retreat line.

The opposing team can only advance over the retreat line once one of the following occurs;

1. The goalkeeper plays the ball out and one of his/her team-mates touches the ball.*
2. The ball leaves the field of play.
3. The ball goes over the retreat line.

*If a referee believes the defending team are purposely not touching the ball to give them extended time on the ball they will warn the team and also allow the opposition players across the retreat line.

Teams don't have to wait for the opposition to go behind the retreat line. If they decide that they want to play a quick pass to a team mate they can still do this.

Which age groups will this affect?

As of Spring 2015 the retreat line will be used in the 3rd/4th and 5th/6th grade leagues for both boys and girls.



How will we indicate where the retreat line is on the field?

- 3rd/4th grade league the retreat line will be the half way line
- 5th/6th grade league the retreat line will be placed 15 yards* from the half way line as shown below and we will use Flags to mark where the retreat line is.

*This may be subject to change, as I need to confirm exact field dimensions.



What happens if a player advances beyond the retreat line before the opposition has touched the ball, or fails to drop behind the line?

On the first occasion the referee will stop the game and explain to all players the reason why he/she has stopped the game. Play will restart with either a goal kick or with the ball in the goalkeepers hands, depending on what the scenario was prior to the referee stopping play.

For any subsequent incidents by the same team the referee will stop play and award an indirect free kick in the middle of the retreat line to the opposition.

For the first few weeks, referee's will give extra leeway to the players as they adapt to the new laws. They will continue to educate players on the new law and explain it throughout the game.



Why are we introducing a retreat line?

At East Side Soccer we want our players to be comfortable in possession of the ball and to be able to play the ball out from the back. We want them to be able to dribble the ball and pass the ball when under pressure. We want them to be able to become decision makers and be able to think independently within the ever changing environment of a game of soccer.

At this young age a lot of goals are scored from other teams goal kicks or when the other teams goalkeeper has the ball. This has led teams to be fearful of the ball and not want to play it out from the back. Instead they just punt the ball up the field to get it as far away as possible from their goal. Consequently this starves players of getting touches on the ball and passing or dribbling is replaced with just kicking it aimlessly.

Unfortunately this is detrimental to the players long term development as this actually prevents them getting comfortable on the ball. Teams adopt a kick and rush mentality, where they just kick the ball forward and chase as there is less chance of players making mistakes and losing the ball. This also leads to teams at a young age focusing on the players who can kick furthest and are big and strong (generally players who physically mature early). However as players get older and they go through their growth spurt this approach becomes less affective . It is also very easily combated by teams who can master the ball and possess the ball.



How will a retreat line help?

The retreat line will encourage teams to play the ball out of the back. The defending team will now get more time on the ball when the goalkeeper has it, as the other team will be behind the retreat line. This will enable players to control the ball, get their head up and then decide for themselves what they should do next with the ball.

The retreat line will initially cause players to make more mistakes as they get used to understanding it as well as getting familiar with playing out from the back. This is fine and is part of their development process to becoming better players. In the long term players will start to learn from their mistakes and will become more and more comfortable on the ball and be able to decide what to do with the ball.

This is not to say that a long ball from the goalkeeper is always wrong. They may notice a team mate free further up the field which is fine and would be excellent decision making. However we want to change the players default choice of kicking it long aimlessly just to get the ball forward and away from their goal.



How can we help?

East Side Soccer is a developmental league where we aim to develop players who will succeed in the long term. We don't focus on solely winning.

Understand that players will make mistakes and that this is all part of how they learn and develop as players. As coaches you can help them learn from these mistakes by asking the players for the solutions.

Coaches, players and parents we ask you to encourage the players to pass the ball out from the back, play without fear and not just kick the ball aimlessly down field.

As coaches we ask you to not line up all your players on the retreat line to chase down the one player who has just received the ball from the goalkeeper. This may get you a goal, however it is against the spirit of what we are trying to do in developing the players for the future.

