



# Crusaders United Soccer Club

## Guidelines and Policies Parent/Player Manual

**The Parent Player Manual** is designed to guide players and parents through the Crusaders United Soccer Club (CUSC) club operation. There is a necessity to produce this manual, as it is critical that each player and parent clearly understands the philosophy of the club. This year the CUSC will have over 20 traveling teams with at least one team in every competing age group in both the boys and girls competition sides. With this many teams, it is absolutely essential that everyone understands and knows their role in the club.

Coaches must know what the club, parents and players expect from them. Players must know their role and how they should approach the game so they are prepared to learn. Team Managers must know their role and how to fulfill their duties. And finally, Parents should know their role and the boundaries we have in place concerning parental involvement.

*The most important task we face is to make sure every player in the club becomes a better player and enjoys the game.* Enjoying the game will not only help players learn, but it will enhance many other aspects of a healthy living environment, such as learning social skills and building character. There are many ways to impact the development of players, but the most important is to provide a coach that meets the credentials required to make an impact on the players. Finding a coach of this caliber is not easy. Our standards are high.

Crusaders United has an excellent group of enthusiastic, capable, and experienced coaches and we have been very happy with the coaching level. However, there is always room for improvement. All good coaches know this, as the game changes in numerous ways from season to season. Therefore, there is a need and an expectation for continuous improvement from coaches. Crusaders United Soccer Club coaches are encouraged to learn new coaching methods by watching other CUSC and professional coaches. They have many resources available to help them including our own coaching clinic series directed by Club Coaching Director Matt Cushing and a tuition/registration program for coach's education. Furthermore, we are continually searching for qualified coaches. When a new coach joins our staff, it is under the premise that they will coach within the club for many seasons to come. The Club makes the final decision on which team a particular coach will direct for the season and the benefit to the players are always in the forefront.

There are many other ways, other than bringing credible coaches to the club that we can directly impact player development. The tournaments and leagues in which teams play is crucial and the attendance by players to the weekly technical sessions, goalkeeper training and Speed, Agility, and Quickness training classes, the college forum day, one on one coaching and trips abroad to professional academies. Our paradigm for development is constantly evolving to ensure every player has the very best opportunity to take soccer to the next level and become a better soccer player.

## **Age Groups:**

The Crusaders United Soccer Club enters boys and girls teams in the highly competitive Massachusetts Premier League (MAPLE), as well as, other high level leagues from ages U-11 through U-19. Players are grouped in their appropriate age of play according to the current soccer year as noted below but, at the discretion of the Director of Coaching and team coaches, may play up.

Under 11 – not reached 11th Birthday by August 1.

Under 12 – not reached 12th Birthday by August 1.

Under 13 – not reached 13th Birthday by August 1.

Under 14 – not reached 14th Birthday by August 1.

Under 15 – not reached 15th Birthday by August 1.

Under 16 – not reached 16th Birthday by August 1.

Under 17 – not reached 17th Birthday by August 1.

Under 18 – not reached 18th Birthday by August 1.

Under 19 – not reached 19th Birthday by August 1.

The Crusaders also have a Junior Academy Program for young players between 7 and 10 years of age. In addition, the club may on occasion enter youth or adult teams in other leagues and competitions.

## **Soccer Year**

The soccer year is currently defined September 1st through August 31st. However, the effective soccer year is tryout-to-tryout, usually in June of each year. Players are placed on a roster for that entire year and tryout during the summer for the following age group team.

## **To The Parents**

The most important part of this manual, and perhaps the reason behind taking the time to produce it, is this next section. It is vital that each parent has a clear indication of how the club views the role of the parent. Far is it from the club to ever tell a parent how to "be a parent." However, we are asking that when a child is brought to Crusaders United, that you trust us to make the child a better person as a direct result of the CUSC coaching and the CUSC environment. We are looking for your trust. We are the best-placed people to make decisions for your child in terms of playing soccer. This 'unofficial rule' is paramount in the operation of the club. If there is a lack of trust in this matter, then parents should not be sending their child to play for CUSC. The boys and girls at training time and match play are under our direction, since our coaches will be providing the information to best serve the player and team.

Within this framework, though, there may be disagreement and confusion on behalf of players and parents. In these cases, **players** are asked to approach coaches in an attempt to resolve any issues. Although this may be hard for a player, we feel adopting this policy only serves to help individuals mature. The situation, of course, is different for the younger members of the club. In situations where the player is too young to deal with an issue and it is necessary for a parent to get involved, we ask that parents follow these guidelines. If a parent has questions for a coach, please:

- Call them or make an appointment to meet. Please remember that most coaches work for the Club on a part-time basis, and therefore, spend most of their time on their individual careers. However, they do realize that part of their job with CUSC is to communicate effectively with parents if situations arise, and they are prepared to do this.
- If you have a question regarding something that has happened during a game, parents are not allowed to approach the coach until 24 hours after the game.
- If you have something to say to the coach, please make sure that your comments get to the coach. Do not voice your opinions on the sidelines. The club will not tolerate complaining and degrading on the sideline. Any parent who is persistent in these actions may be limited in their attendance or may, under certain circumstances, be asked to leave the club.
- If, after meeting with a coach, an issue is not resolved, then the Director of Boys/Girls should get involved in an attempt to resolve the situation. If that solution is not acceptable then the Director of Coaching will attempt to make a final resolution to the situation.

The club understands the underlying subjectivity of soccer, and therefore, opinions are expected. However, players will be expected to follow the coaching expertise of the coach. The following are guidelines that parents are asked to follow and adhere to when watching their son or daughter in games or practice.

- Parents should not make degrading remarks or foul language to referees.
- Parents should not make any degrading remarks or foul language to the players on a CUSC team or their opponent.
- Please do not time the amount of time players are on the field. Rather, if you feel a player should have been more involved in the game, have the player speak to the coach.
- Encourage players, especially older players, to approach the coach on their own to ask any questions that they may have.
- During practice times, keep your distance from the practice sessions, and do not interfere with the session. This is particularly important with the younger ages. Parents

should be a spectator from a distance at practices, leaving space to train and the coaches to get on with their job.

Parents that like to coach from the sidelines are often coaches themselves. Naturally, they want to offer advice in ways to help the player or the team. However, these parents must realize that, although they are coaches, they are not the coaches of the CUSC team. The Crusaders United Soccer Club coach may have different instructions or a system that only the players understand. Multiple instructions from the sidelines often confuse the players. So please, leave the coaching to the coaches

## **Playing Time**

Playing time is not guaranteed. In premier soccer, playing time is earned by attending practices and games, paying attention to the coaches, working hard, showing progress and being a good teammate.

- For a player to develop and the team to be successful, parents must understand that all practices and games are mandatory. Understandably, conflicts sometimes do arise; however, it is frustrating for coaches when a player is continuously absent. Absences from practices or games must be pre approved by the coach. If the absences are frequent, the CUSC coach has the right to remove that player from the roster.
- Any sort of verbal abuse made by a parent toward a coach will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This type of action clearly shows a lack of responsibility from the parent, and a lack of respect for the club. If this instance occurs, the individuals will be asked to leave the club.

In closing this part of the manual, it must be said that CUSC considers itself very fortunate to be surrounded with talented players, and supportive parents in the club. We are thankful for the many parents who have helped CUSC become the success it is. The club asks all of its parents to continue in their support, deal with issues in the correct manner, and feel comfortable that their son or daughter is receiving a valued soccer experience from Crusaders United.

## **PLAYERS**

All the coaches at Crusaders United are involved with the club quite simply because we have a passion for soccer, and we love to coach. Having an opportunity to coach the game and see it played properly is something that appeals to all coaches.

All of our coaches have played soccer to varying degrees. Most have played in college, some coaches have All-American honors, some have played professionally, and some have played internationally. All the coaches are licensed either with the NSCAA, USSF or with soccer federations from other countries. Even though the coaches have all of this playing and coaching experience, each of us feel very fortunate having the opportunity to coach for Crusaders United and consider ourselves servants of the club. We are dedicated to making you a better player. There is no other club in the country that cares about a player's soccer development more than Crusaders United. Here are some ideas in order to help you enjoy playing for your club and to get the most out of your experience.

You should all remember and constantly remind yourself that you are fortunate to have parents that are prepared to do whatever it takes to let you play soccer. For instance, schedules at home have to be managed and changed, other siblings may require transportation to soccer and other events. There is much time and expense involved in getting you to games, practices and tournaments. So be sure to thank your parents often for giving you the opportunity to play.

- Practice is essential to your development. You must be prepared to work hard all of the time at each practice, and do your best to be on time. You must also be prepared to practice outside of your scheduled practices, games and tournaments. Take pride in your equipment; brush your boots off if they are covered in mud, rather than throwing them in your bag and leaving them until your next practice. Make sure your ball is adequately pumped up, and remember to have the proper attire for practice.
- Remember to shake the hand of the referee and the opposing team after the game. Keep in mind, soccer is only a game.
- The coaches are there to help you. If you don't understand something the coach does or says, don't be afraid to ask the coach why he or she said or did that.
- Indoor practice time is a vital component in your development. These sessions are mandatory. If you are able to get on the field earlier than scheduled, use the time to work on your ball skills and control.
- Watch soccer on TV. There are many televised games from the U.S., South America and Europe now. You should make the time to watch these games and see how the game is played at the highest level. Pick out a favorite player from the M.L.S. and from abroad. Watch these players and try to emulate them.
- The last item, and the most important, that you should think about is school. No matter how talented, enthusiastic, dedicated, and passionate you are about soccer or any sport; your education must come first. Regardless of your age or grade, you must all strive to do your very best at school. Success in the classroom is the stepping-stone to being successful in life. The Club places a huge emphasis on your education and players need to realize that an education ALWAYS comes before playing soccer for Crusaders United. Please make sure you apply yourself to your studies. Having said that, we also expect our players to budget their time appropriately. **It is not acceptable to hang out at the mall with your friends or watch TV all day and then miss practice because you won't have time to finish your homework.**
- Finally, remember that you represent yourself, your family and the club every time you play, practice, or travel with Crusaders United. Behavior of our players throughout the year has been excellent and this must continue for years to come. Whether you are participating in our U-8 Academy or our U-18 team, conduct yourself in a mature and responsible manner.

## Teams

Coaches have the direct responsibility of the team. The coach and Technical Staff decide upon a particular league and tournament in which to play. The coaches manage the team as they see fit, with input from other coaches if desired. The following information will set guidelines on how each team will operate during the year, with a month-by-month breakdown of events and activities. Each Coach and Team Manager should provide the team with a general expected schedule and a more specific schedule as needed.

## Tournaments and League play

Once coaches have decided upon a particular league and tournament, parents and players are informed. ***THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR TOURNAMENTS*** dictates a three to four month window of application and then acceptance. Please understand that all plans must be made, usually prior to actually being accepted to the tournament. This is especially true of highly competitive tournaments for our highly competitive teams. There is a possibility that the team will not be accepted and that plans will need to change accordingly and suddenly. This sometimes creates an inconvenience for the families as well as the coaching staff plans, however, it is the only way to be prepared if the acceptance is forthcoming. Coaches often have two or more choices of leagues they can play in, but it must be decided what league is best suited to the team based on ability. The league a team enters can change from year to year, or even between fall and spring. Similarly, the Technical Staff and coaches will decide what tournament a team will play in, again based on the team's ability. All U13 and older CUSC teams will be entered into the Massachusetts State Cup.

## Season Breakdown

### Fall/Spring Teams (U-11 through U-14)

This schedule is not conclusive and subject to change per coach's requests.

- Mid to late August - Outdoor practice begins
- September - Outdoor Season begins
- November - Outdoor Tournament/Event
- December - March Indoor training/league play  
January: Skills and Team Training (SAQ)
- March - possible outdoor tournament as per coach's request
- April - Practice outside and spring season begins
- May - Memorial Day Tournament
- June – MAPLE/STATE CUP Tournament games

- July – Club Day Cook Out- Regional Tournament. (If applicable)

## **Winter and Spring Teams (U-15 through U-18)**

This schedule is not conclusive and subject to change per coach's request

- December, January, February, March – Indoor practice and league play  
With SAQ and Skills session
- March - potential outdoor tournament as per coach's request
- April - Practice outside and spring season begins.
- May - Memorial Day Tournament.
- June – STATE CUPS/ MAPLE tournament games
- July – Club Day Cook Out - Regional Tournament (If applicable)

## **Dual Rostering**

Players at CUSC (U14 and below) are allowed to dual roster with another town or association team. However, any player that is dual rostered must give CUSC and his or her team priority if and when there is a conflict. This also means that players must allow adequate time to get to their CUSC game to prepare for the game. Players should not be playing for one team only to show up 10 minutes before kick-off to play for CUSC.

## **Try-outs**

CUSC has open tryouts every year. This means anyone that wishes to tryout is welcome, and encouraged to do so. Tryouts for the younger players (U-11 through U-14) are in June and begin their season in August. The older players (U-15 through U-18) tryout in June and begin their season in December (the beginning of the older teams season is during the indoor period). The reason for including tryout information is to inform the club of how teams are formed. The 'open' tryout as stated means everyone, who wants to, may come to the tryout. The teams are picked based on playing ability of the individuals. If the player in question is good enough and they are in the top 18 players at the tryout, that player is picked for the team.

CUSC coaches understand the difficult task of choosing teams, and no coach likes to make those decisions alone. Every tryout for every team has a minimum of two selection coaches and two directors present for the duration of those tryouts. There are discussions about the demonstration of every player that take place prior to any team final selection. The coaches' watch the demonstration of the players, use previous knowledge of the players or ask previous coaches about the players to ensure they have made the right decisions. Players need to understand that playing for CUSC in the past does not guarantee a place on the roster for the

next season. The nature of a 'Premier' club intends to create the best team(s) possible given the talent on display. Throughout the season players are given the opportunity, 100% of the time, to show the coach what they can do and stake their claim as a continual fixture on the team.

## **Communication**

All players and families are requested to take a look at the CUSC website for club activities, coaching contacts, Director Contacts and team information. Your Team Manger is the first line of communication with your team and should be contacted with questions first.

[WWW.CRUSADERSUNITED.COM](http://WWW.CRUSADERSUNITED.COM) is the web address.

All Players are expected to sign and return the CUSC Players Agreement prior to the start of the soccer year. This document shall be given to the Team Manager at Club Day or prior to ANY activity with the CUSC Team. You can download this contract as well as other registration material from the website.

In addition to the apparel that is included in your team membership, all other replacement items or additional items can be ordered directly from We Got Soccer under the CUSC web link at a club member discounted cost.