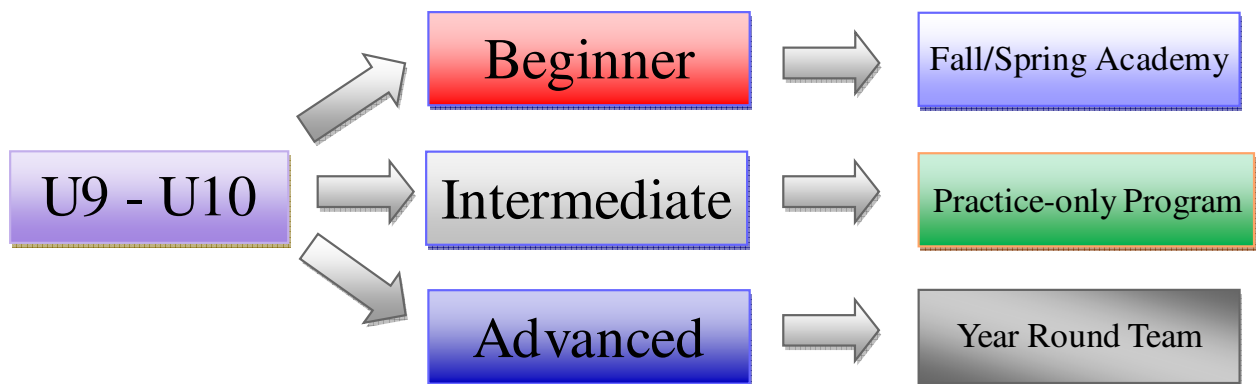




ISC Philosophy and Team Handbook for U9-U10 Year Round Advanced teams.
 [Updated May 2011 by Jon Cook, ISC Director of Coaching]

This document was put together to provide a complete summary of our advanced level program for U9-U10 players. Please note that we also have beginner level programs and intermediate level programs for U9-U10 players. The program levels for U9-U10 players are listed below. This document covers only the Advanced Level Program.



Who is eligible to play on the ISC U9-U10 Year Round Advanced teams?

There are two requirements that players must meet to participate in our *Year Round Advanced Program for U9-U10 players*. First, anyone who is willing to comply with our game attendance standards outlined on pages 16-18 of this document will be accepted into our year round advanced program. Second, all members in the year round program will be responsible for coaching, registration, team, and administrative fees that are required as a part of participation. Please note that we do offer financial assistance for those families with financial need. All financial assistance is based on need, not athletic talent. The ISC takes great pride in our annual fundraising projects that help raise funds in order to assist families with financial burdens.

To be clear, we do not turn players away based on ability. We accept all players in the *U9-U10 Year Round Advanced Program* that want a serious soccer experience with excellent coaching. Our soccer club was founded by Jerry Zimmerman in 1997 based on the principle that the ISC would function as a youth soccer organization committed to helping all players improve and grow regardless of their natural ability. Moreover, loyalty to our players is one of our guiding principles. When players join our club, our coaches remain loyal to all players and focused on the development of our players as long

as each player is willing to meet our minimal commitment standards for the year round program. We remain committed as ever to Jerry's vision and passion for building a club that is open to all levels of players. The ISC mission is to help all players reach their soccer potential in an enriching team and club experience.

Coaching the Youth Player-The ISC Difference is our Expertise in Coaching

The U9 and U10 year for soccer players is an exciting time for both players and coaches. Players are enthusiastic about learning new skills and they adapt well to new challenges. The U9 and U10 players play soccer because it is a fun sport that offers them the opportunity to play and compete without much interruption in the action. If both parents and coaches structure the environment in training and games properly, the game of soccer should afford every child the opportunity to exercise a tremendous amount of freedom of movement, decision-making, and expression in each training session and in each match. Young players need to play soccer in an environment that gives players the freedom to simply have fun and explore the game with an unabashed creativity and spontaneity.

Most U9 and U10 players who join the ISC thrive in our player developmental and child-centered approach which places an emphasis on keeping sports fun for young children. Our players need not worry about making simple mistakes in the game, nor should any U9 or U10 player be concerned when they play “out of position” during an official match. If U9-U10 players have any fear that the coaches will punish them or discourage them from exercising freedom and creativity during the game, the players will become mere robots with little ability to play with individuality or creativity. In the ISC we do our very best to help guide players to develop their understanding of the game without taking any of the fun and individual creativity out of the game of soccer.

One of the things that the ISC is best known for is our high level of quality coaching and teaching that we offer to all of our U9 and U10 players. We believe strongly in paying special attention to the youth player because the U9-U10 years are critical years for skill development. Players need to develop a solid technical skills foundation in the context of a training environment that presents players with game-like situations.¹ In order to help players improve their skills and at the same time enjoy the game to its fullest extent, young soccer players who want to develop into competitive players need to be guided by qualified and expert level coaches. An expert level coach will encourage players to develop technical proficiency with the ball without sacrificing the development of individual creativity that is paramount to player development.

To be a successful youth coach for U9-U10 players, the expert youth coach must be more than a patient teacher and a former player. While being a patient teacher and a former player are absolutely essential, those skills alone do not qualify someone to take a U9 or U10 team with the ISC.² The ISC youth coach must also understand the players

¹ According to Dr. Istvan Balyi, who is an expert in the field of long-term athletic development, “Under development between 6 and 16 cannot fully be overcome; athletes will never reach their genetic potential.”

² Rainer Martens wrote that “when suddenly thrust into the role of coach, novices do the obvious: They coach as they were coached or as they see others coach.” The problem with that according to Rainer Martens is that the coaches start to coach as if they are working with adults not children. Martens, Rainer, *Directing Youth Sports Programs* (Human Kinetics, 2001), 48-49. In the ISC, our coaches will not be coaching by trial and error with your kids. They will have the appropriate training from day 1 so that they know the coaching implications of working with young kids as opposed to coaching adults.

and he/she must know how best to teach young soccer athletes. Knowing how young children learn is critical to good teaching in any environment. When an ISC coach sets up any practice or training goal for the U9 or U10 player, he/she is careful to consider all of the factors that affect the learning environment for the young player. Just as elementary teachers must be cognizant of the intellectual capabilities and emotional needs of their students, a good youth coach must understand the cognitive limits of the U9 and U10 player. The coach must also be aware of the psychomotor developmental traits of most 9 and 10 year olds and the psychosocial characteristics common to kids of this age.

Without a broad and deep understanding of the characteristics common to players of this age, the coach will set unrealistic goals for players and for teams. In the long run, any approach to youth coaching that does not take account of the unique characteristics of young children will discourage children and take the fun out of the game.

Few soccer organizations take as much pride in their teaching and coaching of the young player as the ISC. Each new ISC parent should feel confident that the club has spent the last 14 years revising our training plan to ensure that his/her U9 and U10 player will have fun each day, and at the same time receive the best age appropriate instruction. Moreover, our Director of Coaching is very active with all coaches who work with the U9-U10 players in terms of helping them develop an understanding of the developmental factors that affect youth players. **We do not simply hire former players and assign them to teams without proper mentoring, education, and licensing.** In addition, we work closely with all of our coaches to encourage them to view coaching as teaching and we value coaches who are teachers and those coaches who understand that learning takes many forms. When considering which year round soccer club to join, you should be concerned if the club believes that the U9-U10 coaching job can be handled by the club's least experienced coaches. The ISC guarantees you that our coaches in the U9-U10 program have the skills and knowledge to coach young children!

Playing Time for the U9 and U10 Player in the Iowa Soccer Club

Soccer isn't fun if at the youngest ages if your child isn't allowed to play in games. All U9 and U10 players deserve the right to play in both halves of every match.

Our focus for the U9 and U10 player is centered on individual player improvement and team development. This means that we measure success by player and team progress, not only by wins and losses. While everyone wants to win games, our most important goal for every soccer match in the U9 and U10 year is to make sure that ALL of our players improve and that ALL of our players are faced with new challenges in each game. Players cannot improve at the U9 and U10 age if they don't play in games. While we don't guarantee that every player will play exactly the same amount of time during each match, we do guarantee that each child will play in 10 minutes of each half. The league games at the U9-U10 age are 44 minutes long. Therefore, your child will be playing in close to half of each game.

While we have a recreational track, intermediate track, and a year round program for U9 and U10 players in the ISC, we are very hesitant to assign labels to players at eight, nine, or ten years of age. Players choose the *U9-U10 advanced year round training program* in the ISC because they have decided that they want to commit more

time to soccer than the players that chose the recreational track or intermediate track. We don't do any official tryouts that group players by ability at this age, nor are we allowed to by our state association.

We give all U9 and U10 players a choice to join the year round training programs, the intermediate programs, or the recreational only program, called the ISC Academy. By giving players and families the choice to choose their track at U9-U10, we are making a clear statement to all players and their families that players develop at vastly different rates in their first few years of soccer. Therefore, we see no benefit in grouping players by ability at such a young age nor do we see any benefit in withholding certain players from participation merely for the purpose of winning a game at the U9-U10 level. If advanced players need more challenges, we work with each individual to offer them more opportunities in the club. However, we do not treat our eight, nine, and ten year olds in the same way that we may approach the development of our U13-U18 players. A good youth sports organization must have a different approach for their youngest players and their older players. Therefore, our approach to playing time for young players is appropriate and consistent with our club philosophy. The only long term effect of keeping someone on the bench for an entire half or game at the U9-U10 level is that the spirit of the player that is withheld from the game will be crushed. Our club wants to help players improve and develop for long-term success, but we will not develop one group of players at the expense of the others.

<h3>Team Formations for ISC U9-U10 Year Round Advanced Teams</h3>

- **We accept all players that commit to our team requirements**
- **All players who join an age group will train together**
- **We do NOT make "A" and "B" teams within our U9-U10 Advanced Level**
- **We make even teams**
- **We change the teams from fall to spring but all players still practice together**

Players in the U9-U10 age group play in a 6v6 format. This means that each team has five field players and a goalie. Each team is allowed 10 players per roster. When we form teams for the U9-U10 age groups, our coaching staff takes all of the available players that are interested in playing in a particular age group and then divides the players on teams with the purpose of forming teams that are as even in ability as possible. The ISC does not form "A" teams or "B" teams at the U9-U10 age group. **Moreover, the ISC does not discourage anyone for any reason from joining our U9-U10 teams!** We do not believe that the process of grouping the 10 players that seem to be furthest ahead in their soccer ability and development at 8 or 9 years old on one team is consistent with the ISC philosophy of player development. Players who join our U9-U10 teams have a greater interest in soccer than players that play in other organizations or the players who

have opted to play in the Academy only. Once players choose the U9-U10 year round teams in the ISC, the players are not then grouped again by ability.

To reiterate the point made many times before in this philosophy statement, our primary purpose and goal with our U9-U10 teams is to encourage and assist players in their progress toward individual and team development. One of the main objectives of the ISC youth program, U8-U12 program, is to help players improve and progress in their development as soccer players so that they can acquire the skills necessary to enjoy soccer for a life time. We do not measure success for our youth program in terms of the win/loss record of our teams.

Experienced soccer coaches and educators understand that young athletes develop at vastly different rates and at different times. Trying to pick the 10 players at nine and ten years old that will be the best soccer players in the long run is an exercise in futility. Therefore, we do not believe that grouping the best players on one team together at such a young age is beneficial to each individual's overall player development nor do we believe that such an approach fosters a positive and healthy attitude amongst parents and children. We strive to engender a real passion and excitement for soccer amongst our U9-U10 kids in the ISC. It is our goal to encourage the young players to play soccer for as many years as they can. Putting an emphasis on forming a "super star" team that wins all of its games at this age does nothing but satisfy the egos of the coaches and parents. When young players are surveyed and asked why they play sports at this age, very few young children cite winning as the most important factor. Most kids who are eight, nine, or ten years old, play sports because they are fun. While kids still need to win games to develop a positive attitude toward their team and its development, forming one team in each ISC age group that wins all of its games while the other ISC teams in the same age group struggle to find success is not an approach that is in the best interest of all of the kids in a given age group in our club.

The process that we follow to form teams is relatively simple. At the U9 year we take all of the players and form teams that we believe will be as even in ability as is possible. Starting in the Fall of 2009, the league that ISC U9-U10 kids play in, the ICCR youth league, will require that all teams change their rosters by 50% from the fall to the spring season. This is a new change that was promoted by the ISC and we are thankful that our staff had a role in effecting this change in the league. Our staff was able to convince other league members from other clubs that the purpose of our league should be to promote the soccer development of all players in the league. Therefore, the ISC staff made the formal request of the league to consider implementing a rule change that would require clubs to balance their rosters with players of varying ability from season to season. We are excited that our motion at the spring 2009 ICCR meeting passed and will be adopted in the Fall of 2009. It is the view of the ISC coaching staff that this rule change is a positive move for the league and its players.

We believe that mixing players from season to season is important in many ways. First of all, by mixing new players and players with one year's experience in the club, the balance of outcomes in regard to wins and losses for all of our teams and players is evened out. We would not take all of our new players and put them all on one team together for a new season. New players enjoy far greater success when we mix them with the players that have some prior experience in the club. Moreover, by moving players from team to team for each season, we give all of the players an opportunity to

compete in games with some of the other players in their same age group within the ISC. Competing with new players each season creates new challenges that will help players develop and improve for long term success in the game of soccer.

In sum, teams are not grouped by ability, geographic area, car pool groups, nor are team assignments based on friendships alone. All team formations for the U9-U10 years are made with the purpose of fielding equal ability based teams so that each ISC team has a reasonable chance to experience success and so that we avoid labeling players as “A” or “B” players at such a young age. There are plenty of years ahead to win league titles and tournament titles. There is no need yet to superimpose an adult’s construct of what sports should be like for the nine and ten year old.

Positions

Often when a child joins an ISC team at the U9 or 10 year, his/her parents ask what our policy is in regard to specializing in positions. Because the U9 or U10 player is a developing player, the ISC coaching staff believes that young players will enjoy greater long-term success and experience more overall enjoyment in the game of soccer if they are given the opportunity to play in a number of different positions throughout each season and each game. Young players have very little difficulty moving from playing as a defender in one half of the game to playing as a forward in the other half of the game. Not only can young players handle playing more than one position, the experience of playing in more than one position is a great learning opportunity for each individual on the team.

The argument can be made that there may be disadvantages in regard to the outcome of each match when we ask players to play in more than one position in each game. Our answer to this comment has to be considered in light of our club’s overall U8-U12 philosophy. As was discussed above, we measure success at the U9 and U10 years in regard to player improvement and team progress, not solely by wins and losses. Therefore, while we acknowledge that there may be negative consequences in regard to the outcome of one game in particular when we move certain players that are well suited for a particular place to another position that they are less familiar with, the long-term benefits that will be reaped by the individual player and subsequently the team as a whole will far outweigh the short term consequences of such a coaching move. Each position offers players a different vantage point to view and experience the game. Moreover, each position on the field offers players different technical and skill challenges that are important for players to experience in order for the players to enjoy long-term success in the game of soccer. We feel that keeping players in one position for an entire season or even an entire year is detrimental to the development of the player.³ **Therefore, we**

³ Katherine Thomas, associate professor of health and human performance at Iowa State University argues that allowing children to specialize in a “position within a sport at an early age- especially when the decision is based on body type or size-may have a negative impact on lifelong participation.”³ Professor Thomas’s arguments should influence our choices as soccer coaches especially if the coaches are concerned about the long term participation of his/her athletes. How many times have we seen a team play their fastest and most physically mature player at sweeper or center back for every minute of every game whenever we play that team? The choice to some coaches is obvious. If you have your most physically mature player rooted in the center defense, the chance that the other team’s forward can break through and score a goal is obviously going to be significantly lower than if the coach puts the team’s least physically

guarantee that each player will play in more than one position in each game during the U9-U10 seasons.

I have provided an example below that is illustrative of why we feel it is essential to require that our players play in more than one position in each game.

We had this player who was quite a spectacular goal scorer at U9 and U10. He was very fast and he seemed to be much quicker than anyone he played against. He relied almost solely on his speed to score goals, which worked at the U9-U10 level. His team coach always played him at forward because he always produced goals for the team. When he reached his U12 year, most of the other players had caught up to his speed advantage and he no longer scored goals. Because he was no longer scoring goals, his new coach tried to move him into other positions so that the player could find success. However, the player resisted playing in new positions and struggled to adapt to the different roles required of the other positions. Not only did he struggle with the tactical demands of the different positions, he had developed only some of the technical skills necessary to have success in the game of soccer because he had only been asked to repeat one task game in and game out. When his new coach played him in the midfield, he struggled to adjust to the transition of the game and he didn't know how to connect and combine with other midfielders. When his new coach played him as a defender, he hadn't learned any of the skills of defending. Eventually, this player, who had once loved soccer, quit the game because he was no longer having fun.

I always believed that if this player had been challenged at a young age to play in different places on the field, he would have learned so much more about the game. It is examples like the one mentioned above which have helped us to formulate our current policy. In the long run, we believe it is more important to keep kids playing sports such as soccer for as many years as possible rather than focusing our energies on posting the league's best win/loss record during the U9-U10 seasons. Our policy of moving players from position to position in different games provides each player with different challenges and responsibilities and goes a long way to keeping kids excited about soccer for the long term.

<p>Long-Term Success Comes from treating kids like kids!</p>

Although a lot of the discussions in this document might seem to convey a sense to some parents that the ISC is not a very competitive club for the most talented players, one should not assume that if your child is very talented that you need to go to a club that puts a greater emphasis on winning. The ISC is a well established club with an excellent

mature player at the center back. But as Professor Thomas also points out, the most physically mature player at 11 or 12 might not be the biggest, strongest, fastest athlete on the team at 15 years of age. If the player in question no longer possesses the athleticism to excel at the only position that they know how to play, how well has the coach prepared the athlete to enjoy the game for the long term?

Katherine T. Thomas, Ameila M. Lee, Jerry R. Thomas, *Physical Education Methods for Elementary Teachers* (Champaign, 2003), 41-42.

track record for developing high level players. The methods that we believe are appropriate for young children work well for both the most naturally talented players and those with less natural ability. Keep in mind, kids are kids no matter what their ability level, and kids think and act differently than adults. Understanding that we need to follow a child-centered approach for soccer development has allowed the ISC staff to encourage players of all ability levels. In fact, the ISC has been widely successful in developing players to play at very high levels of soccer in the United States. We have developed numerous United States Youth Regional players as well as many, many collegiate soccer players. In fact, for a relatively small club in a small community, we are lucky to have had four of our players receive invitations to train with the youth U.S. national team. In addition, we are lucky to have had two of our former female players play professional soccer both in Sweden and in the United States.

However, we didn't help these players get to this level by treating them like adults when they were eight, nine, or ten years old. Promoting a passion for skill development and a passion for the game itself is the most important part of our coaching job at the U9-U10 level. Your child will NOT be less competitive in the long run as a result of the fact that our coaches don't put a huge emphasis on the scores of the U9-U10 game. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. We believe that your kids will be more energized about the game for many more years to come and they will have acquired the skills and insight necessary to enjoy the game at the highest level that their ability will allow them to compete.

<p>Soccer is for your child, keep things fun and your child will progress faster!</p>
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How Can I help make sports more fun for my child?

There is significant research that demonstrates that young children enjoy sports and activities much more if they don't feel stress. Some studies show that as many as 44% of young athletes felt that the stress that they experienced to succeed caused them to actually perform with less confidence.⁴ Certainly we all know that high level athletes or even high school athletes need to learn to deal with stress in order to be successful. In my 13 years of working with youth soccer players I have met many parents who believed that the earlier their kids learned to deal with the stress of sports, the tougher their kids would end up becoming in the future. While I recognize that these parents were well intentioned, this type of thinking is actually counter productive to any young child's progress in athletics.

To assume that introducing stress and stress factors to young athletes will actually improve performance in the long run for children 4-10 years of age, assumes that children think, act, and respond to competition in the same way that adults do. It is hard for us as adults to remember why we enjoyed playing sports when we were young. We think back to when we played sports in high school and college and we assume that our kids are thinking about sports in this adult way. Kids are thinking about playing! Young children are thinking about having fun! As much as we want to think that we can fast forward our kids' mental toughness at ages 4-10 years of age by being tough on them and

⁴ Horst Wein, *Developing Youth Soccer Players*, 11.

expecting great things from them, the reality is that this type of thinking is an uninformed position that fails to take into account the relevant research about children and their stages of development.

My recommendation then for parents is to come to the U9-U10 games and watch the games and enjoy watching your child have fun. Don't coach them while they are playing on the field and don't critique their play with them at this age when the games are finished. Mistakes are a huge part of a soccer player's development. In fact, new studies show that the average 8 and 9 year old often makes as many mistakes in a game or practice as they make successful passes or dribbling runs. Such a high mistake rate for young players is normal and knowing this should put you at ease when you watch your child play. You don't need to correct everything for them in order for them to be successful.

My advice to parents is to avoid asking their kids whether or not they won all of their games on match day. Moreover, the average youth player does not want to hear you tell them everything that they could have done better. Ask your child if they had fun in the game. Ask them how they liked playing the positions they played or ask them about a great skill move they used in the game. Any of these questions are far more positive and supportive than asking your child why they didn't pass to so and so in front of the goal, or why they didn't see the attacking player on the other team when he/she scored a goal against your child's team. If the kids don't feel pressure from the parents and coaches at this age, they will play with more excitement and exuberance.

Other things that you can do to help build your child's interest in soccer is to show your interest in their play by suggesting that you are always up for a game of 1v1 in the park or back yard. This type of interaction with your child demonstrates support for their interests and is a great way for you to encourage healthy exercise habits for both you and your child. If you aren't inclined to sports yourself, there are many other ways for you to demonstrate your support for your child's interest in soccer. Take them to a MLS game or look online for a professional women's game in the new W-League. One of the former ISC players, Christen Karniski, is a professional player for the Washington Freedom, maybe you can go online and see when her team plays this spring. There are other great local options to watch soccer also. The University of Iowa Women's team plays in the fall and there are tons of great soccer matches with the local high schools in the area during the spring. All of these options demonstrate your support for your child and are more age appropriate than having a "play by play" of the game in the car ride home.

ISC Coaching Staff Position on Tournament Travel for U9-U10 Teams.

Beginning in 2006, the ISC coaching staff determined that we would no longer allow our U9-U10 teams to travel out of state to compete in soccer tournaments. In addition, the coaching staff put a limit on how far each U9-U10 team may travel within the state of Iowa. The ISC's U9-U10 teams may only travel within a 60-80 mile radius of Iowa City to compete in tournaments or league games.

The ISC believes that it is important for the professional coaches of the club to determine when and where teams should travel and how often the kids travel. As a competitive soccer club we feel it is important to expose each player to as high of a level of competition as possible, but we have to weigh that overall goal with a broader concern of making the ISC club experience a healthy part of each young child's life. As it should be clear from reading our philosophy statement, the ISC coaches are concerned with the long term development of each of its soccer players. We want our kids and their families to be just as excited about soccer at the U9 level as they are at the U18 age group. Too much travel at a young age contributes to the cost of club soccer and to what we believe is a burn out factor for players. There is an abundance of good teams in the Eastern Iowa area that our U9 and U10 teams can compete against in order to sufficiently challenge each player.

<p>Benchmarks for success for the U9 ISC Player by the end of the U9 Year.</p>

One of the hardest things for parents and novice coaches is to evaluate player progress in terms other than the score of the game. To assume that your child is progressing well simply because the team wins a lot of games is not a good benchmark for success. I have listed a few of the main areas that your child should be showing improvement during the U9 soccer season:

- Can your child run smoothly with the ball when in the open field? In other words, can they turn the toe and ankle in and dribble with the outside of the foot while running with the ball with speed in the open field?
- Is your child capable of keeping the ball close to their foot as they approach a defender when dribbling?
- Can your child use their weak foot well enough at this age to at least “pull” the ball over to their strong foot?
- Can your child change direction with the ball by using the outside of the foot? In other words, can they perform the “hook” turn easily and efficiently.
- Does your child have the coordination and balance to change direction when running with the ball? In other words, can they stop sharply when turning and changing direction when running with the ball?
- Does your child understand that a change of speed and pace can sometimes be the simplest way to beat a defender on the dribble?
- Is your child picking their head up after they beat the defender on the dribble? It is ok for the U9 player to look at the ball for a touch or two after they push the ball past the defender, but if by the third touch after they have gone by the defender they are still looking at the ball, the U9 player is not gaining control of the ball soon enough after their successful dribbling move or changes of direction.
- Can your U9 player, stop the ball with the sole of their foot and move the ball quickly after they have stopped the ball to avoid a defender?
- Does your child automatically put their head down and dribble forward when they receive the ball? In the ISC we STRONGLY encourage U9 players to dribble and take risks in all parts of the field, but by the end of the U9 year we want the players to know where the nearest defender is in relation to the player in

possession of the ball. There is no way that I think a U9 player will know this every time they receive the ball. In fact, many strong U12 players still make this mistake. However, I think that a U9 player that is progressing well should, by the end of their U9 year with the ISC, be able to make good decisions about whether to dribble forward into space with speed or whether to take a touch sideways or backwards at least 1 out of every 4 to 5 times they receive the ball. Some studies show that most U9 and U10 players make a mistake as often as they do something positive with the ball. In terms of knowing when to plunge forward with the ball and when to move the ball away from the defender, I think the success rate is even less than 50% for U9 players. Therefore, as parents and coaches we should be content if we see the U9 players start to think in advance of dribbling the ball at least 25% of the time.

- Does your child clear the ball with a huge kick out of the back when they are playing as a defender when the ball is played to them or when they intercept a pass? The ISC coaching staff will always tell the players to “take a touch” in these situations so that the player settles the ball and deals with the challenge of the ball at their feet. Even when players make mistakes when they try to control the ball and prepare the ball for a good pass out of the back they are learning so much about how to deal with the ball in relation to an oncoming defender. If we constantly encourage the players to “clear” or “get it out” we may save the team from getting scored on once in a while, but we aren’t promoting skillful soccer development for your child. Again, we need to have a STRESS-FREE environment in games as it relates to coach and parent input. The kids don’t need to feel extra stress to clear the ball quickly, they need to develop into the cool and confident player who artfully takes a touch, picks his/her head up and finds his/her own way out of the pressure. If they make a mistake and give the ball away they should know that it is their responsibility to try and win the ball back, but we should NEVER punish them for taking the initiative to try and play skillful soccer.

Remember these are very general benchmarks. Just as some kids crawl at 8 months and some take longer to crawl, not all of these benchmarks have to be met by the end of the U9 year. Just as important, don’t start to over coach your child if they are not meeting these benchmarks. As I said earlier in the document, getting them stressed out at 9 and 10 isn’t going to help them improve faster. If you are concerned, keep your concerns to yourself, but encourage the family to play fun games of soccer in the backyard or park. The more they have the ball at their feet playing against a defender and moving to a goal, the more skill and vision they will develop with the ball. Even if your child is progressing very well, get out and play 1v1 and 2v2 games with them. Even goofing with the ball with them will help. For example, give them the ball with no space defined and see if they can get past you. Take turns and have fun! I cannot stress enough how much this will be beneficial to them and to you. In addition, watching professional soccer games with your children will help them improve their imagination about the game and it will generate greater interest in the sport for you and your child. In addition,

the ISC “super skills” program was designed as a supplementary program to help aid players in their skill development.

ISC Club Policy on Sideline Behavior from Parents
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First and foremost, the ISC is a well established soccer organization that has an excellent reputation for conducting ourselves with dignity and class on the sidelines. We DO NOT tolerate any type of misconduct from parents on the sidelines. It is absolutely unacceptable for ISC coaches or parents to direct any derogatory comments toward the opposing team’s players or their coaching staff. Furthermore, ISC parents that consistently engage in taunting or argumentative behavior with the other team’s parents will be asked to leave the game. If any parent cannot follow these rules their child will be asked to leave the soccer club.

ISC Club Policy on Sideline Coaching From Parents
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Please allow the kids to play without parental instructions from the sidelines. I don't mean to offend anyone with this request. As parents, you have a tremendous influence in regard to how your child develops as an athlete. Furthermore, some of you may be very knowledgeable about the game of soccer and I don't mean to suggest that the ISC coaching staff are disrespectful in any way in regard to your own soccer experience. That being said, as the Director of Coaching for the ISC, I have an expertise in youth coaching and youth development and it is my role to set the boundaries and guidelines for who coaches during games, what information is given to players, how the information is given, and when the information is given to players.

In order to encourage a positive learning environment for your kids to grow and develop as soccer players, we need to be very careful in regard to the instruction we offer and how much instruction we offer during matches. If the parents and coaches offer too much instruction, the kids will never be allowed to "solve the soccer problems" on the field. I do not, nor do any of the ISC coaches, tell the kids what to do with the ball every time they receive the ball. The game of soccer moves very fast and part of good youth soccer coaching is the skill of teaching players how to make decisions on their own in the games. Please don't work against what we are trying to accomplish by giving specific instructions to your child every time that they have the ball.

It is equally important to remember that while you may have some sound knowledge of the game of soccer, the advice that you may think is critical to offer may not actually take into account the age and developmental factors of your child and his/her teammates. When the ISC coaches offer instruction during the games, the points that the ISC coaches make will follow a very specific developmental plan that considers the cognitive abilities of each player at their particular level. Therefore, we don't expect the kids to see the game in the same way that the adults do from the sidelines. Even if you have never played soccer, your mental capacity as adults allow you to "see the game" and understand what a player should do with the ball in a way that the average U8-U10 player is not capable of yet due to their age and developmental level.

Finally, the ISC coaches offer consistency in coaching when we address your kids. When the ISC coaches offer coaching points from the sidelines, the instructions are consistent with the themes that we cover in training. If parents are offering different advice than the ISC coaching staff, players become confused and frustrated. Furthermore, all of the ISC coaches that will work with your team will use similar terms and coaching points. It is important that all of the ISC coaches use similar terms and provide similar instruction so as not to confuse the players when the head coach of a team, is not present for a game and another ISC staff coach fills in for the head coach.

Skill Development U9 ISC



Strong Foot Juggles –In a row (“continuous”)

	End Fall 2010	End Winter 2011	End Spring 2011
Average	5	7	9
Good	7	9	11
ISC High Achiever	11	13	15
ISC Record Level	20	25	30

Weak Foot Juggles –In a row (“continuous”)

	End Fall 2010	End Winter 2011	End Spring 2011
Average	2	4	6
Good	4	6	8
ISC High Achiever	8	10	12
ISC Record Level	12	17	22

Right-Left Alternating Continuous Juggling

	End Fall 2010	End Winter 2011	End Spring 2011
Average	2	4	6
Good	4	6	8
ISC High Achiever	8	10	12
ISC Record Level	12	17	22

Skill Development U10 ISC



Strong Foot Juggles –In a row (“continuous”)

	End Fall 2010	End Winter 2011	End Spring 2011
Average	11	13	15
Good	13	15	17
ISC High Achiever	17	19	21
ISC Record Level	35	40	45

Weak Foot Juggles –In a row (“continuous”)

	End Fall 2010	End Winter 2011	End Spring 2011
Average	8	10	12
Good	10	12	14
ISC High Achiever	14	16	18
ISC Record Level	27	32	37

Right-Left Alternating Continuous Juggling

	End Fall 2010	End Winter 2011	End Spring 2011
Average	8	10	12
Good	10	12	14
ISC High Achiever	14	16	18
ISC Record Level	27	32	37



ISC Player Commitment Expectations for Advanced Level Players

2011-2012 Season

The expectations below apply only to the U9-U14 ISC Year Round Players in our Advanced Level Programs

Background:

The ISC supports and encourages all of our U9-U14 players to be active in other sports, activities, and organizations. We do our best to offer our year round programs in such a way that all of our year round players on the U9-U14 teams have the flexibility to pursue the other activities that they want to be involved with even as our program runs throughout most of the year. We do, however, have some minimal expectations that we require all of our year round players to commit to in order to maintain their position on their team.

The commitment rules were put in place to ensure that our teams can field players for the events that we participate in throughout the year. Just as importantly, it is imperative that all of our players in the U9-U14 age groups meet some basic standards of commitment if we are to meet our player development goals for all of the year round players. We take great pride in doing our best to help all of our players in the year round program reach their soccer potential. However, given our club structure, we cannot help every player maximize their potential unless every player in our year round program makes the commitment to the standards we have outlined in this document. For our player developmental system to function properly, the players need to be on the same commitment track.

If you make a commitment to our program by following the rules below, we will provide playing time guarantees for all players in the age groups from U9-U14 for all league games and tournament games. Furthermore, if you can meet the basic standards of commitment, we feel that we can do our very best to help you reach your soccer potential. The ISC Advanced Level Program is open to all players of all ability levels and we make a point of finding a place for all players. All we ask is that all players in the U9-U14 year round advanced level program commit to the standards that we feel must be met in order for the ISC to be successful in mixing players of different ability levels on the teams in our advanced level programs that run year round.

Tournament Attendance for all U9-U14 ISC Year Round Players:

Fall Season:

All players must commit to at least **1 full weekend tournament in the fall season**. This means that the player must be in attendance for all games of the tournament. The fall season begins in August and ends in early November. A complete schedule of fall 2011 tournaments for each age group for U9-U14 teams can be found at the end of this document. This schedule may be subject to some revision.

Winter Season:

All players must commit to at least **1 full weekend tournament in the winter season**. This means that the player must be in attendance for all games of the tournament. The winter season begins in mid November and ends in mid March. A complete schedule of winter 2011 tournaments is distributed to the membership at some time during the fall season.

Spring/Summer Season:

All players must to commit to at least **2 full weekend tournaments in the spring/summer season**. This means that the player must be in attendance for all games of 2 spring/summer 2012 tournaments. The spring/summer season begins in April and ends mid July. A complete schedule of spring/summer 2012 tournaments for each age group for U9-U14 teams will be distributed during the winter season.

League Game Attendance for all U9-U14 ISC Players:

All ISC Year Round players are required to participate in a fall, winter, and spring league with their ISC teammates.

Fall Season:

Players **do not need to attend all league games** with their team in the fall season. We want players to have some flexibility to play other sports or miss some weekend games due to other activities that arise. Each player must make 3 league games in the fall season. Most players attend more than this, but 3 league games is the minimum requirement. All of our teams have a volunteer team manager. We ask that all parents on the team notify the team manager if they intend to miss a league game so that we are aware of how many players will be in attendance for each game.

Winter Season:

There are two sessions of indoor soccer that you can choose to sign up for during the winter months. You do not need to play in both sessions. All games are played indoors in a facility located north of Cedar Rapids in Hiawatha. The facility is about 35 minutes away from most places in the Iowa City area. The first session of indoor soccer usually runs in the months of November-December. The second session usually runs from January-early March. All ISC players in the age range from U9-U14 must play in at least one of these two sessions. For the session that you choose to play in, you must play in at least 3 of the games.

Spring/Summer Season:

Players **do not need to attend all league games** with their team in the spring/summer season. We want players to have some flexibility to play other sports or miss some weekend games due to other activities that arise. Each player must make 3 league games in the spring/summer season. Most players attend more than this, but 3 league games is the minimum requirement. All of our teams have a volunteer team manager. We ask that all parents on the team notify the team manager if they intend to miss a league game so that we are aware of how many players will be in attendance for each game.

Practice Attendance for all U9-U14 ISC Players:

We do not have official practice attendance rules for our U9-U14 players. While we certainly put a lot of value in practice, we don't have practice attendance rules for U9-U14 players in order to allow all of our members the flexibility to pursue other sports and activities. We provide each age group with some basic guidelines of the number of practices that we think

they should attend, but we don't mandate practice attendance at the U9-U14 age levels.

We do have a special program for ISC U11-U14 players called the "Rewards" program that offers participation at a special travel tournament to players who make a commitment to a set number of practices during the months from November through early March. This program is optional and no player is required to participate in the winter "Rewards" program.

Playing Time Guarantees to our U9-U10 members:

As long as each player meets our minimal standards of commitment outlined above we will provide the following playing time guarantees:

League Games:

U9-U10 League Games:

10 Minutes of playing time in each half of all league games for a total of 20 minutes per game. The 10 minutes per half is played in a block of ten minutes. In other words, all U9-U10 players will play their 10 minutes of each half consecutively so as to maximize their involvement in the game. League games at this age are 44 minutes long. So all players are guaranteed at least 20 minutes of the 44 minute game.

Tournament Games:

U9-U10 Tournament Games:

10 Minutes of playing time in each half of all tournament games for a total of 20 minutes per game. The 10 minutes per half is played in a block of ten minutes. In other words, all U9-U10 players will play their 10 minutes of each half consecutively so as to maximize their involvement in the game.

ISC Tournaments for U9-U14 Teams
Fall 2011

ISC U9-U10 Boys and Girls
Late August 2011-Super Sixes-Iowa City
Late September Heartland-Cedar Rapids

