

Dear Parents of Colorado Ice developmental soccer players,

I would like to take this opportunity to further explain our decision to provide professional club coaches for our U9 and U10 teams. Starting in the fall of 2010, this will affect all U10 teams and our U9 Academy teams. We plan to furnish club coaches for all U9 and U10 teams by the fall of 2011. I am more excited about this new program than any other initiative by Ice since I became VP of Developmental and think that the payoff down the road will be huge.

I think the best way to approach this is to dispel some of the myths and answer some of the questions we've heard circulating about this new policy.

1. Our kids aren't ready for competitive soccer. This is not a move to make soccer more "competitive" at this level. The distinction between "Competitive" Soccer and "Recreational" or "Developmental" soccer lies in the way teams are formed. "Competitive" soccer teams are formed through tryouts. We do not have tryouts until U11.

2. It's too early to be getting serious. Our kids need to have fun. We wholeheartedly agree that these kids still need to have fun, and this goes beyond U10 soccer. We remind you that these coaches know better than anyone what it takes to teach the game of soccer to an 8 or 9 year old boy or girl and how to make it fun for them. Coaching soccer to children is their passion and they have the experience to know how to make it fun for 3rd and 4th graders. For those players that do ask for a more "serious" approach to soccer, we offer the Academy program. But this is separate and distinct from our new policy of providing quality professional coaches to our younger players.

3. We shouldn't be emphasizing winning. Absolutely true. Teaching sportsmanship and nurturing a love for the game should always come before winning, and our coaches know that. Our professional coaches understand the true mission of developmental soccer. They will be true to that goal which is to develop soccer players. We do not accomplish that by scheming and strategizing to win games. We do that by trying to bring out the best in each of our players as it relates to the game being played.

4. How do we know we will like our coach? That's a tough one, and we cannot provide any guarantee that every player and parent will like every coach. But that goes for parent-coaches as well. Between the U8 and U9 years, we inevitably have some players moving between teams as roster sizes increase and the number of teams decrease. Around 20% of our players will have new coaches, some whom they have requested, and others just by club assignment. There is always a chance that someone won't get along with their new coach (or old coach for that matter). I would only suggest that our club coaches' collective experiences will help them be flexible and accommodating to the needs of our members.

5. What if the head coach and parent/assistant coach do not get along? Again, this is not an easy one to answer. However, I would suggest that this should not be a problem as long as the assistant coach understands his/her role as an assistant. The parent coach will be there to help out during practices and coach games played away from Rooney. It is expected that they will honor the head coach's philosophy at those away games as they pertain to formations, player positioning, substitution patterns, strategy, and tactics. All of this should be covered in a preseason meeting between the head coach and the parent-assistant.

6. Who will our coach be and will they continue to coach this age group beyond U10? We hope to complete coaching assignments by the middle of July. We would like to emphasize that we are not looking at newbie coaches. We understand the importance of these assignments and that we need to find the best available personnel to foster a love and passion for the sport. In order to allow us to select the proper coaches, we will not be looking down the road to U11 team formation in a year or two. While it is

certainly possible that some of these coaches will be available to coach a U11 team when your son or daughter goes to tryouts, we will not be considering that in our deliberations.

7. We are taking the players away from the coaches that they love. If we were indeed doing this, we would not keep the current parent-coaches on as assistants. For the most part, players will still see the same coach they have seen for the past year or more, just with a new head coach. I really think the kids will view it as a seamless transition.

In closing, I would like to paraphrase one of our club coaches who contributed to this discussion in an email to me:

As coaches, we are all constantly developing players, and as individuals we are all striving to be successful. I personally only have three aspirations while coaching, and that is to instill the life-lessons of respect, responsibility, and accountability through the world's "beautiful game." I am amazed that our professional staff is being characterized as wanting to "win at all costs" considering what I have witnessed from parent- spectators and parent-coaches at the developmental level.

Thank you all for your patience and cooperation as we move forward to offer the best possible soccer opportunity for our children.

Best regards,

Jim Treitman
VP Developmental, Colorado Ice