

2014-2015
PARENT HANDBOOK

**Competitive Programs
All Ages**



Respect . **A**ttitude . **G**reatness . **E**xpectations

MISSION STATEMENT

The Pleasanton RAGE is an all girls' soccer club that makes team and player development its central focus. We offer challenging programs at all levels that demonstrate a strong commitment to the development of the whole player including the technical, tactical, physical and psychological areas of our player's development within the team environment.

Philippe Blin
Pleasanton RAGE Technical Director

Tamie Shadle
Pleasanton RAGE Program Director

Steve Moura
Pleasanton RAGE Competitive VP

www.pleasantonrage.org

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION:	4
CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION (PROBLEM ESCALATION PROCESS)	4
CLUB EXPECTATION OF PLAYERS	5
<i>Player Responsibility</i>	5
<i>Practicing On Your Own</i>	6
<i>What Does It Take to be an Athlete?</i>	6
CLUB EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS	7
<i>Parents' Code</i>	7
<i>Game and Practice Etiquette for Parents</i>	8
<i>List of Approved Cheers</i>	9
<i>List of Prohibited Cheers</i>	9
CLUB EXPECTATIONS REGARDING ABSENCES, INJURIES AND PLAYING TIME	10
<i>Voucher System During League Season (July – November/December)</i>	10
<i>Post League Season (State Cup prep and State Cup for each age group)</i>	10
<i>Playing Time Guidelines</i>	11
<i>Communication Is the Key</i>	11
RAGE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY	12
<i>Four Pillars of Soccer - The RAGE Way</i>	12
<i>What is Player Development?</i>	13
<i>Player Development vs. Winning</i>	13
<i>Clash of Coaching Philosophies in Youth Soccer – Winning vs. Development</i>	14
AGE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	14
<i>RAGE Youth (U8-U11) Development Program</i>	14
<i>U8 Program</i>	15
<i>U9 Program</i>	15
<i>U10 & U11 Programs</i>	16
<i>U12-U19 Player Development Age Groups</i>	16
<i>U12-13 Program</i>	16
<i>U14 and Above</i>	16
<i>ECNL</i>	17
<i>Premier, Orange and White</i>	17

COMPETITIVE LEVEL TEAM GUIDELINES OVERVIEW	17
<i>Placement Process</i>	17
<i>Playing "Up"</i>	18
<i>Open Boundaries</i>	18
<i>Olympic Development Program (ODP), Player Development Program (PDP)</i>	18
<i>Team of Coaches</i>	19
EVALUATIONS	20
PLACEMENTS	21
STATE CUP	22
TOURNAMENTS	22
INSURANCE COVERAGE BY USCLUB SOCCER	23
WEBSITES.....	23
<i>RAGE Website</i>	23
<i>NorCal Premier Website</i>	23
<i>ECNL Website</i>	23
<i>EGSL North Website</i>	23

INTRODUCTION:

Since 1972, the Pleasanton Girls Soccer Association (the “Club”) has provided soccer to the girls of Pleasanton. Over the years, the Club has developed a competitive soccer program to complement the recreational program as more players seek the opportunity to develop their skills. The Club has an aggressive strategic plan in place to enhance both the recreational and competitive programs.

The Club’s soccer program is managed primarily by a Board made up of volunteers. Over the years, several paid Technical Staff members, a few contractors (i.e., bookkeeper, website manager) have been added to the staff. However, the majority of the policy and organizational implementation is handled by volunteers. The Club does not function without the countless hours these dedicated individuals spend to bring soccer to the girls of Pleasanton. Please consider joining us as a volunteer – it is vital to your daughter’s team, as well as the Club as a whole.

The purpose of this Handbook is to explain the Club’s approach to the teaching of soccer. We will attempt to take you through a typical year of a soccer player. Another purpose of this Handbook is to provide answers to many of the questions players and parents have during the course of a season. Club policy questions will be discussed in great detail; however, in addition to this Handbook, please review the Policy Interpretation Memoranda (“PIMs”) and General Procedures (“GPs”) which are on the RAGE website (*see*, www.pleasantonrage.org, under ABOUT OUR CLUB). PIMs may be revised and/or updated during the year by the RAGE Board. Please use this Handbook as a reference guide to answer any questions prior to sending emails or making phone calls.

Just as the Club is a work-in-progress, so is this Handbook. We value your opinion. If you find an answer to a question in this Handbook or on the website that does not satisfactorily address your concerns, or if you believe the suggested resolution is incorrect, please send an email regarding your thoughts to the appropriate Board member (email addresses are on the RAGE website, under CLUB DIRECTORY).

The Club holds approximately eight Board meetings annually, parents and family are encouraged to attend and participate. Dates and location of Board meetings can be found on the RAGE website.

CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION (PROBLEM ESCALATION PROCESS)

During the course of the soccer season, parents and players may see things that concern them or that seem unfair to your daughter or other members of the Club. We encourage you to make us aware of these issues so we can correct any wrongs or injustices, or at least, offer explanations. The Club has established the following procedure to handle this communication procedure more efficiently.

- Step 1. Email the source, most likely the Coach or Trainer. This should always be the first step. Please communicate in a respectful tone and if you have not received a reply within eight (8) days, please proceed to Step 2 or 3.
- Step 2. Email the Age Group Coordinator (recreational and flight teams ONLY)
- Step 3. Email the Technical Staff
- Step 4. Email the RAGE Board Divisional Vice President
- Step 5. Email the RAGE President

If there is a soccer-related issue, the Coach is the first person you should contact. If there is an issue that you believe you cannot bring through this escalation process, please contact the RAGE Ombudsman, a

Board member who will address your issue. The RAGE Ombudsman can be reached via email at: rage-ombudsman@pleasantonrage.org. For financial concerns, please contact the Club Treasurer at: rage-treasurer@pleasantonrage.org.

Not everything will run smoothly, players and/or parents may feel uncomfortable or ill-treated by some event. We know there may be problems and issues that arise on teams, and the Club wants to hear all sides; however, many problems are easily resolved when discussed in a respectful way. The suggested method of communication is via email, unless time is a critical factor (i.e., if safety is involved). Email allows for thoughtful communication between parties. Phone calls may be an intrusion on an individual's private family or business time.

CLUB EXPECTATION OF PLAYERS

The Club requires all players to understand and abide by specific commitments when you become a competitive player. In addition to this information below, please review the "Players Responsibility" section on the RAGE website (under COMPETITIVE).

Pleasanton RAGE is all about you, the player. Everything the Club does is to make your soccer experience, the best it can be. As a player you should:

1. Play for the fun of it, not just to please your parents or coach.
2. Play by the rules.
3. Never argue with or complain about the referee's calls or decisions. Respect the game.
4. Control your temper, and most of all, resist the temptation to retaliate when you feel you have been wronged.
5. Concentrate on playing soccer and on affecting the outcome of the game with your best effort. Work equally hard for your team as well as for yourself.
6. Be a good sport by cheering all good plays, whether it is your teams or your opponents. Treat all players as you would like to be treated.
7. Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve skills and feel good. Don't be a show-off or a ball hog.
8. Cooperate with your coaches, teammates, opponents and the referees.

Player Responsibility

Being a competitive player requires that you take on another level of responsibility for yourself as a student-athlete. What follows are practical suggestions to make the most of your individual or team training times. You should be ready for anything.

1. Be Ready to Play
At every training session and games, each player should bring the following:

-Inflated ball	-Emergency phone numbers
-Jump rope	-Water
-Shin guards	-Mini-ball pump
-Cleats and indoor running shoes	-Remove jewelry, including watches
-Tape	-Keepers – gloves and long-sleeved shirt
2. Try to arrive at practice 10-15 minutes early, in time to get your gear on so you are ready to start on time.
3. NO flat balls! Jump ropes and shin guards are a MUST!!

Practicing On Your Own

One of the best things that you can do is to get your friends together, set up a field, choose sides and play. Even consider inviting players older than you! The most important thing is that you play, whether 1v1, 2v2, 4v4, or even 2.3 – it doesn't matter – JUST PLAY!! You can play games or work on skills that you do at training.

If you can't get others to join you, spend as much time with the ball as you can. Find a wall to kick against, invent juggling games, try and chip a ball into a garbage can from different distances – be creative, and have fun. Realize that it is up to you to improve, it is not up to the coach, or your parents, just YOU. You have to claim responsibility for your own development. Once you realize how fun it is to play the game with skill, you may never want to stop!

All competitive players will be asked to sign a Player Code of Conduct form (see RAGE website, under COMPETITIVE, then "Player Responsibility").

What Does It Take to be an Athlete?

Being an athlete means more than wearing a uniform and being a member of the squad. There are many more important lessons involved with being an athlete; athletes want to "win" not only in soccer, but in life as well. Your coaches want to impress upon you the importance of the following qualities which make good athletes.

Are you "coachable?"

Can you take coaching? Can you take criticism without ever looking for an alibi? Are you a "know-it-all?" Will you always do your best to improve?

Are you possessed with the spirit of competition which fires an intense desire to win?

Do you want to win with passion – never taking "no" for an answer when there is a job to be done – a tackle to be made – a shot to be taken – a pass to be made? Does it bother you to lose?

Are you willing to practice?

Not just showing up at practices, but working every day with the same zeal, speed and determination you use during game day? Do you have two speeds – a practice speed and a game speed? The great athletes have only one speed, and it is the same speed every day, every practice and every game. If you loaf and cheat in practice, you will loaf and cheat in the game.

Are you willing to make sacrifices?

Conditioning to play is not fun, it is not easy, it is time-consuming and demanding. Training is designed to accomplish specific objectives; and the responsibility is heavy. It is rough and includes personal denials in order to remain in match condition, but it has its rewards and benefits. The only way to remain in good shape is to never get out of it.

Do you have the desire to improve?

Are you willing to practice the things you cannot do, three times longer than the things that you can do? Are you willing to put in long grinding hours, concentrating on skill until you perfect it? Are you eager to work diligently at the skills you lack until they eventually become your strongest assets?

Do you have the ability to think under fire?

Can you concentrate on the work to be accomplished at the moment? Can you shut out from your mind a previous failure, success, rule infraction, or personal insult in order to give undivided attention to the offensive and defensive maneuver in the here and now? Games are not won by yesterday's score, but by what is happening now, at this moment. Good athletes play every play up to their best ability never depending on past success to aid them.

Are you willing to be impersonal toward your opponents?

Can you shut out personal feelings about your opponent except to take the ball from him as often and as quickly as you can in accordance with the rules? Experience has taught us that the moment a player becomes personal he/she plays only to release individual grievances and ceases to play soccer as a team player.

Will you strive daily to improve your muscular coordination and speed?

Soccer is a game of movement. Daily activities will speed up your reaction time and improve your technical speed. Speed and coordination are necessary ingredients for a winning combination. Only through hard work can improvement take place. Players who lack these two physical qualities can help themselves and their team by improving in other areas.

Do you believe in your team, your coach?

Your team is as good as you make it. Your coach has the responsibility of coaching, not his team, but your team. Are you willing to work toward the spirit of oneness so that everyone possesses the feeling of belonging through his or her contributions to the team?

Are you willing to study as hard now as you did before coming out for soccer?

Soccer was never meant to take the place of studies. This involves realignment in your time schedule. If soccer consumes two hours of your day then you must take time not from scholastic areas, but from hours previously devoted to personal pursuits. If you must eliminate something from your schedule, it must not be study time. First thing first, and academics are of paramount importance.

CLUB EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Parents are vital to the Club. Support your child, your coach, and the referees. Encourage your child to respect the referees, coach, and 'honor the game'.

Parents' Code

Parental Support - The Key to Your Daughter's Performance:

The role that parents play in the life of a soccer player has tremendous impact on her experience. With this in mind, here are some helpful reminders as we approach the upcoming season. If you have any

questions about these areas, please feel free to discuss them with the Technical Director, or with your Team Manager.

Let the Coaches coach:

Leave the coaching to the coaches. This includes motivating, psyching your daughter for practice, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc. You have entrusted us with the care of your player and we need to be free to do our job. If a player has too many coaches, it is confusing for her and her performance usually declines.

Support the program:

Get involved. Volunteer. Help out with fundraisers, carpool; anything to support the program and most importantly the team. The team cannot function without the contribution of time and effort provided by parents and families.

Support and root for all players on the team:

Foster teamwork. Your daughter's teammates are not the enemy. When they are playing better than your daughter, your child has a wonderful opportunity to learn.

Encourage your daughter to talk to the coaches:

If she is having difficulty in practice or games, or can't make a practice, etc., encourage her to speak directly to the coaches. "Taking ownership/responsibility" is a big part of becoming a big-time player. By handling the off-field tasks, your child is claiming ownership of all aspects of the game - preparation as well as playing the game.

Understand and display appropriate game behavior:

Remember, your daughter models your behavior. If you are a distraction on the sideline your daughter (and others) may display the same type of game day behavior. If possible, be quietly enthusiastic and supportive. However, for those of you whose participation in and familiarity with other sports (football, basketball, baseball and so on) have ingrained in you an irresistible need to yell and scream during a sporting event, then we make the following suggestions (see RAGE website, under ABOUT OUR CLUB, PIM 017 for more details).

Game and Practice Etiquette for Parents

At Games:

Parents sit on one side of the field and teams (coaches and players) sit on the opposite side. Remember, our intent is for your daughter to have a fun, rewarding team experience playing soccer. She cannot do this if you are talking to her during the game or at halftime. Please let the coaches handle the team (game strategies, instructions, etc.) during game time – parents should bring a chair, sit, enjoy the excitement, cheer and be fans. After the game your daughter will love to hear how well she played and tell you how much fun she had (see PIM 001 for more details).

At Practices:

The Club recognizes and respects your desire/need to attend practice sessions, especially when your child is younger (U5-U10). At the same time, we would like to maximize the short amount of time that staff has with your daughters. We would like to provide a practice environment free from as many distractions as possible, especially at the competitive level. It is the Club's position that parents can be a distraction for players during training. In an effort to partner with parents in creating the best possible

experience for your daughters, we have come up with the following practice definitions (to be decided upon by coach – may vary from practice to practice):

- Open Practice: Parents may sit and watch practice as they wish. Please give the coaches enough space to conduct practice without being a distraction or hindrance.
- Closed Practice: Parents may sit and observe practice from a distance. Seating areas are as follows:
 - Sports Park – grass area closest to the parking lot
 - Val Vista – any area outside the gates
 - Donlon - sidewalk
 - Upper Bernal – either bleacher area outside the fence

List of Approved Cheers

- "Win the ball!" The team that is aggressive in gaining and keeping possession of the ball usually wins.
- "Let's go RAGE--you can do it!" A good, general purpose yell for a parent who feels compelled to yell something. It fits almost every occasion.
- "Nice pass (or "shot", or "throw-in", or "tackle", or "save", and so on)" A nice, short yell, for a parent concerned that if too much is said, ignorance of the game may be revealed.
- "Keep hustling, RAGE!"

List of Prohibited Cheers

- Any sentence or phrase which starts with, ends with, or includes the word, "Referee" or "Linesman" For example, "Are you blind, Referee?" or "She's offside, Mr. Linesman--get in the game!"
- "Kick it hard!" Possession of the ball is a primary goal in soccer. We are not playing "kickball." We try to teach the kids to pass the ball to teammates or to open space where teammates can win the ball. At times, because of defensive pressure or the proximity of the ball to our goal, we coach them to clear the ball long. But, unbridled encouragement of the kids to "kick it hard" can often be confusing.
- "Go get the ball!" Be careful with this one. Winning the loose ball is important. But, we do not want to play "bunch ball," where all of the players run all over the field chasing the ball in a pack. Maintaining space, trusting your teammates to do their jobs, maintaining positions of support and attack are important.
- Any negative comment directed at any player, especially your own daughter. This is the rule that separates the "All-Star Parents" from the also-rans. When the votes are counted, into which group will you fall?
- Ultimately, remember to let the coaches do the coaching!

More information can be found on the RAGE website under "Parent's Corner."

CLUB EXPECTATIONS REGARDING ABSENCES, INJURIES AND PLAYING TIME

In order to communicate expectations more clearly, the following are the Club's expectations regarding player absences, injuries and playing time.

For the purposes discussion, the soccer season will be broken down into two pieces:

- League Season
 - July through November or December depending upon age group
- Post League Season
 - November through to State Cup elimination or completion for U9 - U13
 - March (or post high school season) through to State Cup elimination or completion for U14 - U18

Voucher System During League Season (July – November/December)

Players and their families should take vacations prior to the beginning of League Season. Coach will outline their training schedule for the League Season prior to the beginning of the season in order to help families plan.

- Voucher system for Excused Absences – 5 days of missed training, scrimmages and/or games
 - Excused Absences include: illness, academic functions associated with school's academic curriculum, family functions, etc. Voucher can be used with no repercussions to player.
- To use voucher, player must have approval from coach/technical staff.
- Parents/or player (depending on player age) should email Coach allowing as much notice as possible.
- It is advisable to follow up with a phone call to the Coach.
- Missing more than the FIVE days will result in the consequences specified under Playing Time Guidelines below.
- It is expected that RAGE competitive players, after education, place soccer as their first priority during the league season.
- It is at the Coach's discretion as to decisions on playing time after training time has been missed with respect to fitness, strategy, etc. even with the use of a voucher.

Post League Season (State Cup prep and State Cup for each age group)

- Coach will outline their training schedule for the Post League Season in order to help families plan.
- Christmas/New Year Winter Break (applies to U11-U13)
 - Preferably, no vacations during this critical State Cup prep time (may be looked at on a case by case basis with Coach/Trainer).
- Spring Break (applies to U14-U18)
 - Preferably, no vacations during this critical State Cup prep time (may be looked at on a case by case basis with Coach/Trainer).
- Illness/Academic Functions – All absences must be cleared through the coach
 - Physicians note or school note is not required, parent verification and communication is sufficient.
- Disciplinary action shall be up to the Coach's discretion
- Coach's must outline their specific disciplinary actions at the beginning of the season (parent meeting).

- ❑ Injuries
 - In order to protect the player, serious injuries (head injuries, broken bones, etc.) will require a doctor's note clearing the player before they are able to return to training, scrimmages, and/or games.
 - The Club and Coaches would rather see a stronger player return later, than a hurt player trying to come back too soon.
 - A player does not need to use a voucher for serious injuries. If the player is able, they should attempt to attend as many sessions (training, games, etc.) as possible.

The Club reserves the right to permit Coaches to introduce their own program of excused absences. These programs will be subject to Technical Staff monitoring.

Playing Time Guidelines

Playing time is determined by a combination of many factors:

- ❑ Effort at training, scrimmages, and games
- ❑ Impact the player has on the game
- ❑ Discipline on and off the field
- ❑ Improvement at training, scrimmages, and games
- ❑ Commitment to training, scrimmages, and games
- ❑ "Coachability" – a player's ability to carry the information to the game and make an impact
- ❑ Missed training, scrimmages, or games. These consequences apply during League Season after 5 vouchers have been used.
 - 1st missed session: sit one half of one game
 - 2nd missed session: sit one full game
 - 3rd missed session: sit two full games
 - 4th missed session: meeting with parent, Technical Director and Divisional VP. Disciplinary action will be taken that can include removal from the team or dismissal from RAGE soccer.

Communication Is the Key

- ❑ If a player is going to miss training, scrimmage, or a game (voucher or no voucher)
 - Parents/or players must email Coach allowing as much advance notice as possible.
 - It is recommended to also follow up with a phone call.
 - The Club understands that people can't predict illnesses. If a player is ill, please error on the side of emailing Coach early. If player feels better by practice time, and can participate, great.
- ❑ Coaches and Technical Staff are open to and encourage any and all questions by parents and players concerning their place on the team.
- ❑ If a parent or player wishes to meet with the coach, they should call or email to schedule a time.
- ❑ It is inappropriate timing to discuss issues before, during, or after games without scheduling a meeting with the coach/technical staff.

RAGE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

Four Pillars of Soccer - The RAGE Way

Physical, technical, tactical and psychological are the legendary four pillars of soccer. Every club, to a lesser or greater extent, tries to teach its competitive and recreational players the fundamentals of these concepts.

1. Physical Pillar

Most clubs, in our experience, put an emphasis on the "physical." In some ways, that is easiest. It is pretty simple to identify the strongest and fastest player who can boot the ball. A girl who can clear the ball a significant distance can be very important if the offense is trained to run at full speed down the field to collect the ball and move it toward the goal. In fact, strength is an important ingredient in a fully developed soccer player. The facts are that most girls will be of fairly similar stature and strength when they are in their mid-teens. We do not rely on physicality of our players and even discourage the type of play other clubs employ, often just to win games.

2. Technical Pillar

At RAGE, the development of the technical side of soccer is of the greatest importance at the younger ages. The basic skills seem to be most readily learned at young ages. RAGE puts a huge emphasis on juggling, for example, at U9 through U12. The purpose of being able to juggle hundreds of times is to become familiar with the feel of the ball and what can be done with it. An ability to juggle plays a major role in how a player traps a ball. You may have seen a player receive a very long ball, sent hard, collected at the player's foot as if it were a sponge. That is a technical skill learned through many thousands of touches of the ball. It is just another way to "juggle." At RAGE, the development of the physical movements, such as speed and agility, will be incorporated into training sessions with the use of a jump rope and speed ladders. We focus on agility, an ability to move around the opponent. We will spend hours on evasive moves, rather than hours on kicking the ball thirty yards, especially at younger ages where accuracy is highly suspect. 1 V 1 and 2 V 2 games give our players an opportunity for many touches on the ball and force a player to develop her moves. Quickness is another technical focus. A player needs to be first to the ball. We practice short-sided games (small fields) because this gives our players many more touches than playing a full field. Besides, a full field forces young players to kick the ball hard, rather than with control and accuracy.

3. Tactical Pillar

Until around U13, players only lightly touch on the tactical aspect of soccer. Tactics involve so-called set pieces, like corner kicks and free kicks. At the younger age groups this seems less productive because players are not able to place corner kicks with much accuracy and those at the net are very reluctant to make headers. They hurt! Other tactical elements of the game are combination plays such as passing strategies, overlapping, wall passes and switching (sides of the field). All of these tactical skills require strong kicks with accuracy. Around U13 or U14, RAGE players will become immersed in tactics. By that age, players should have developed the physical strength to kick the ball hard and receive the ball with finesse. They will have a good foundation in basic skills to move the ball themselves in a run or to pass the ball while seeing the field. After a year or two of admittedly catching up with other teams which have taught tactics without skills, you will see RAGE teams often dominate the field of play.

4. Psychological Pillar

RAGE works on the psychological aspect of soccer as well, the mental make-up of the player. How does she handle failure or adversity? How quickly will she recover and try again? Ability to focus...use her resources? We employ Erika Carlson to assist individuals and teams in goal-setting, leadership, team work, visualization, positive thinking, etc.

What is Player Development?

The Philosophy of the RAGE Soccer Club endorsed by USSF

Our younger aged players represent the most influential period in forming a sound fundamental base and a love of the game. Continue to make training fun while at the same time keeping it consistently challenging and competitive.

Playing to win games becomes increasingly important, but should never be at the expense of playing well.

Avoid the temptation to have your players BOOT the ball long and far in the hopes that one of your fast forwards can win a foot race to create a breakaway. A ball that is aimlessly kicked forward into a sea of opponents with the idea of gaining a territorial advantage is, at best, hopeful soccer. The style of playing incessant “direct” soccer, when a team always plays the ball forward regardless of whether or not it is appropriate to do so in that situation, does not develop players. Moreover, that approach has consistently been proven ineffective at the higher level of the game.

The “direct” approach should also be discouraged because it replaces skillful and creative play with an environment in which aggression and size becomes disproportionately important. While we want to encourage players to be “direct” by going to goal when the opportunity presents itself, there is a huge difference between being constructively direct as opposed to whacking the ball forward all the time.

Playing well means playing intelligent, patient, controlled game in which skill, mobility, and precision are emphasized and applied at speed. A precise pass to a well-timed purposeful run that culminates in a shot on goal is one of the most exciting actions in any sport.

Only if we teach and give our young players the freedom to make choices during the run of play will they be able to fulfill their potential.

Hard though it may be, refrain from bellowing at your players to “shoot it” or “pass it.” A “wrong” decision by a player is better than a “right” decision by a Coach. After the game is the time to discuss why a player made a specific choice in a specific situation, but during the game it must be left to the players to think for themselves.

Player Development vs. Winning

Did you win your game today? What was the score? Did you play the entire game? These are the type of questions our kids, still in uniform, hear when they are in line at Safeway after games or when they get home. Are we sending our youth the wrong message? It seems that youth sports is obsessed with winning, not learning how to play the game

The RAGE philosophy is to make sure that our younger teams (U8-U13/U14) develop extremely sound technical skills (dribbling, trapping, passing, heading, etc.) – this is what we commonly refer to as player development. Players are encouraged and rewarded for attempting to use the technical skills taught in

practice. RAGE instructs our coaches that it is alright for their players to make mistakes, try things that may not work every time, take some risks on the field. Coaches (and parents) are discouraged from shouting orders...shoot!, don't bunch!, pass!, look at Jane!, boot it out!!! (often even conflicting orders) to players on the field. Our hope is that our players become extremely comfortable with the soccer ball at their feet. So comfortable, in fact, that they can and will have the confidence and ability to get out of pressure situations using their newly-learned technical abilities – no matter where they are on the field. By the time RAGE players reach the U14/U15 age groups they are technically ready to focus on the tactical and psychological aspects of their game. Then they can begin to think about the win-loss record.

The RAGE technical staff believes that we are “right on the mark” by placing the emphasis on player development rather than winning at the younger age groups.

Clash of Coaching Philosophies in Youth Soccer – Winning vs. Development

In "Clash of Coaching Philosophies in Youth Soccer-'Winning' vs. 'Development,'" Ivan Kepcija examines the inner workings of youth soccer. In this piece, he explores today's predominant youth coaching philosophies and attempts to realize the best philosophy to implement.

This summary article, the first of a two-part series, analyzes the differences between the winning philosophy and the developmental philosophy, examines the problem by identifying the underlying motivations, and the parents' impact on the game as hurdles to be overcome.

You can download and read the Kepcija's entire master's article in the [Online Resource Library](#).

AGE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

RAGE Youth (U8-U11) Development Program

There are many soccer clubs in the Tri-Valley area which field fall soccer leagues. Since 2005, RAGE has offered the most progressive and unique youth development program in Northern California, and possibly the United States. The emphasis at these younger age groups is to introduce the players to the fundamentals of soccer in a fun, yet more challenging environment than traditionally has been the case. We are convinced that girls at this age show very rapid physical, mental and psychological growth, and can absorb information and develop skills at a remarkable rate if provided with the appropriate environment for learning. Our four-year development program is based on a “low-pressure” in-house playing league, which encourages the players to incorporate the advanced skills learned during the training sessions into the weekend games and not fear “failure.” The success of this four-year program will be measured by the enthusiasm of the players, coaches and parents to continue with soccer for many more years. There is an incremental fee only for the competitive and flight teams. The following is a brief description of the individual programs.

Player development is managed in this age group as ‘pool of players’ with a consistent training approach, age group head trainer, and there is frequent movement between teams on an annual basis. Teams are ranked and placed in leagues according to ability; league play is 8v8 or less. Team play

generally is local within our district (or neighboring districts), but teams may compete in an expanded Northern California area.

Team Names: Orange, White, Grey and Black

Playing League: NorCal Premier, www.norcalpremier.com

League Season: For most teams, both Spring and Fall.

U8 Program

We have enhanced this traditional recreational soccer program. Each team receives at least two training sessions during the season with RAGE Technical Staff. The main focus of these sessions is to introduce the players to 1) basic technical skills and 2) professional coaching staff. The idea is to give the players a beginning soccer foundation which will be reinforced once they reach the U9 and U10 age levels. The club makes available, free of charge, a series of coaches' licensing classes which will reinforce the skills and principles coaches pass along to the players.

U9 Program

Competitive

The RAGE U9 program is a RAGE player's first experience with competitive soccer. The U9 Program is designed to completely immerse the players in a soccer environment. The purpose of the program is to provide players the individual ball mastery of soccer to instill confidence with a ball at their feet. Using small-sided activities, each participant will be provided an environment to create a magician on the ball (1v1/player versus opposition) and the understanding of cooperative play (2v1/teammates versus opposition, 2v2 etc...). The environment is structured so that the players are strongly encouraged to try the skills taught in practice without fear of consequences. Winning and losing become secondary. Teams train twice a week for the entire season under the direct supervision of RAGE Technical Staff and paid coaches. Players and coaches will emerge from the U9 Competitive program with a more sophisticated awareness of the game.

Competitive soccer is very different than recreational soccer, specifically time and financial commitment. Before your daughter agrees to play on a competitive team, both parents and player should read the applicable sections of this Handbook. A thorough understanding of the RAGE competitive program will reduce the number of potentially unpleasant surprises. ASK QUESTIONS. And, yes, there will be many pleasant experiences.

Enhanced Rec

Much like the U8 program this is an enhanced recreational soccer program. Each team receives at least two training sessions during the season with RAGE Technical Staff. The focus continues to be on individual skill development. This program offers an excellent environment for recreational players as well as those wanting to play competitive soccer who may have not been ready (emotionally, physically, etc. – late bloomers) earlier in the year. Teams are coached by parent volunteers who will receive coaching education which reinforces the skills and principles being taught.

U10 & U11 Programs

Competitive

The focus continues to be on individual skill development rather than winning and losing. Teams train at least twice a week with RAGE Technical Staff and paid coaches. Games are usually played against teams from neighboring cities (San Ramon, Danville, Livermore, etc.); however, there are situations when travel distances are even further away. Players are strongly encouraged to be creative with the ball at their feet without fear of consequences. Winning and losing, at least for our teams, is secondary to skills mastery and enjoyment of the game.

NOTE: If this is your first experience with competitive soccer, please see the paragraph above (U9 section) regarding competitive soccer.

Recreational

RAGE Flight teams are for players interested in being slightly more competitive than the recreational program. Flight players will receive additional training (5 team sessions) from Technical Staff and play in an in-house league. They may attend a festival at the end of the season which will allow them to play teams from other leagues of similar abilities. RAGE Flight season is August through November. There is a \$100 additional cost associated with this program. Space is limited to 6 teams. Players are accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis, with the \$100 deposit securing a spot.

U12-U19 Player Development Age Groups

Specifics for U12-U19 players and the curriculum for each age group can be found on the RAGE website under COMPETITIVE tab, then "Parent Info."

U12-13 Program

At U12, RAGE expands team rosters and the 'pool of players' concept is no longer used. Players still move between levels, but not with same fluidity as with the younger teams. Our top team is now called 'Premier' and reflects the change in roster size, competitive level of play, resources, and expectations. Premier level teams typically play against teams that are more Northern California based. The Orange level team will often play a mix of regional and Northern California teams. White and Grey will typically play local teams within our district, but depending upon ability, could play in higher level leagues.

Team Names: Premier, Orange, White and Grey

Playing League: Elite Girls Soccer League (EGSL), NorCal Premier

League Season: Fall and Spring

U14 and Above

U14-U18 introduces the highest level of play, the Elite Clubs National League (ECNL). This league is a national league with 66 member clubs and some regional play in Northern and Southern California and Washington. Commitment and expectations are high at this level, and only four clubs in Northern California participate at this level of play.

ECNL

All U14-18 ECNL teams participate in ECNL tournaments and regional games. A subsidiary benefit to ECNL is that all five teams can achieve a greater sense of Club unity in that there may be multiple teams participate in the same events, stay at the same hotel, and possibly even travel on the same plane. In some cases, teams can watch one another compete.

ECNL replaces the need to apply to different tournaments, without the risk of participation being rejected. However, ECNL travel is costly. Training fees (for nine months) will be approximately \$2500-2800, but travel costs will possibly add an additional \$5,000 (U14 will be much less and U18 about one-third less). Parent travel, unless as a designated chaperon is incremental. We know this is a lot of money. We try to reduce costs by planning air travel and other logistics months in advance, which may save hundreds of dollars. We have established several payment plans over much of the season, for family budget purposes. If the plans we suggest do not meet your needs, please contact the Club Treasurer who may be able to create something more workable for your situation

Premier, Orange and White

RAGE second teams are designated 'Premier' and based upon ability will play the top competition in Northern California. Our Orange and White teams will also play at a competitive level either at the district or Northern California level.

U19 – Team names are Orange and White. RAGE teams at this level include players aged U17-U19 that typically play in a bronze level league will now simply be designated U19 Orange and U19 White.

Team Names: ECNL, Premier, Orange and White

Playing Leagues: ECNL and NorCal Premier

League Season: ECNL year-round; Premier through White Fall and Spring (State Cup)

COMPETITIVE LEVEL TEAM GUIDELINES OVERVIEW

Selection to a RAGE competitive team may require a full year commitment. Players and their families are financially responsible for and expected to participate in the fall season plus all of the team's scheduled tournaments (through State/Regional/National Cup). RAGE competitive team selections are accomplished through a combination of spring placement (tryouts), and coaching assessments throughout the year. For RAGE players, placement is a year-round process. Players who are new to the area or who believe they would like to attend placements may ask the club Technical Director for the opportunity to participate in team training sessions prior to placements. If the Technical Director and the appropriate coach agree, those players will be welcome as guests of the team at practice, as it is in everyone's best interests to more fully evaluate a prospective player. Placement (tryouts) is open to all players, including players from other clubs, and each team will go through the tryout or re-selection process every spring.

Placement Process

At the beginning of the placement (tryout) session, the Club will hold an orientation session for those parents who are not familiar with the Club or with select soccer. The tryout sessions will be divided by age group, and will consist of drills, exercises and scrimmages designed to allow the RAGE Placement Committee to evaluate the skill, desire, attitude and potential of each player. As teams get older and

more established, individual team tryout procedures may vary according to the needs of the team. Final player selections are made without regard to race, religion, creed, color, nationality or ethnic origin. Selection to a team one year does not guarantee a place on the team the following year. Additional information on placements is detailed under the section, "Placements."

Playing "Up"

RAGE believes that it is best for players to play in the age-appropriate level. It is very, very rare that a player has developed the technical skills and emotional sophistication to compete and benefit from playing up a year. There may be exceptions, but the most important question we would ask parents and player is "Why"? Regrettably, ego can figure in the equation, so please be certain of motivations before asking for an exemption from Club policy. The Technical Staff will evaluate any requests, and will use a metric of having to perform among the top five players of the target team.

Open Boundaries

The last few years the subject of the number of "player transfers" (sometimes referred to as open boundaries) has been an issue with the Club. Our constitution was amended in 2000 to say that "75% of the players in the Club" must be from Pleasanton/Sunol areas. Our philosophy as a Club is to train our local players effectively so that they can compete for and maintain a large number of spots on our competitive teams, especially at our older age groups. In fact, this very statistic is one of the criteria upon which the Technical Director's performance is measured. That being said, any player wishing to play competitively for RAGE will be welcomed to tryout and play in the Club. It should be noted that California Youth Soccer Association North (CYSA North) supports open boundaries, meaning that they endorse a player's right to play in any club they wish (CYSA North GP 3:02:02).

Olympic Development Program (ODP), Player Development Program (PDP)

At age U13 and older, each competitive player has the option to tryout for the ODP team. Details regarding ODP located at the CYSA-North (CYSAnorth.org) website. RAGE encourages players to tryout, if only for the experience. At any given age group, several RAGE players may make the team. State team players may progress to Regional tryouts and then to National tryouts. The time commitment seems to be geometrically greater, as is the demand for skills. Throughout this process, the ODP coaches are likely to apply a different set of selection criteria than RAGE would apply for club team selection. ODP seems to focus much more on individual performance as distinct from team-oriented play. Crudely put, selfishness appears to be a factor in ODP selection. Still, this can be a tremendous learning experience and the Club endorses the effort.

The PDP program is similar in nature to the ODP program, but is sponsored by US Club Soccer. Participation at the district level is by coach's recommendation. Information on PDP can be found on the NorCal Premier website or the US Club Soccer website.
www.Norcalpremier.com; www.usclubsoccer.com

We want to make something very clear. Although we recommend players participate in ODP/PDP, the ultimate responsibility of the ODP/PDP player is to the Club and to the RAGE team. If there is a conflict between ODP/PDP play, camps, even holdover camps, the RAGE team comes FIRST. There are unlikely to be many conflicts, but soccer is a TEAM sport, not a ME sport. Rest assured, though, we will not be arbitrary. If there is a choice between something very routine that is Club-related and a significant ODP/PDP event, the Staff or your Coach will be fair. Please give as much lead time as possible so the Staff may be as circumspect as possible. Your Coach in conjunction with the Technical Director will

determine which engagement is more appropriate, but be prepared to be told that ODP/PDP will be secondary.

Team of Coaches

The organization of soccer teams is built around the coaching staff. RAGE coaches, unlike coaches in some other clubs, are considered part of the Club support structure, and they will change teams from time to time to meet the overall Club needs. This "Team of Coaches" approach to soccer is a major asset of the Club. All RAGE coaches are there for the support of all RAGE teams. For this reason, we use a club-wide coaching concept, applicable to all ages, that is described in our RAGE Coaches Manual. Team play is a major objective, and individual players are trained within the team framework. Each team is organized as follows:

- ❑ **The Age Group Head Coach:** The Age Group Head Coach guides the overall technical curriculum for the age group, and is often the technical trainer for each team in the age group. The age group head coach is the focal point for the RAGE staff, and has a feel for the overall development of the age group, as well as for many of the individual players within the age group.
- ❑ **The Head Coach:** A Head Coach will be designated for each RAGE team. That Coach will have overall responsibility for the team, and he or she should be your first contact in the event of a problem. The Coach is responsible for team discipline, player substitution, and game tactics. Other RAGE Coaches/Staff will participate, from time to time, in your team practices and games. The RAGE Soccer Club is proud of its Coaches, and we have made every effort to provide your daughters with the best-available teachers of the game. Please give the Coach your support and assistance.
 - A coach is responsible for the team's development, not only technical training, but also team building and "team chemistry". Team functions will be decided upon by the Coach, not the Team Manager. The Team Manager and other team volunteers should help implement the plans. So as not to place the Team Manager in an awkward position, the Team Manager should be a conduit for passing along information, not a decision maker.
 -
- ❑ **Team Manager:** The Team Manager is an invaluable member of the team organization. The Manager handles or delegates responsibility for many of the administrative aspects of the team, team email and telephone lists, tournament applications and travel plans, and other items to assist the Coach with much of the administrative details of running a team. If you are interested in becoming a Team Manager, or assisting the Team Manager, please contact your Coach. A more detailed description of the role of Team Manager can be found at the RAGE website, under PIMs/GPs.
- ❑ **Other Volunteers:** The demands of running a successful soccer program are tremendous. If you have a skill, or a desire to serve, we have an opportunity for you! Some of the RAGE teams keep team statistics and a parent is "trainable" as a team statistician. Being the uniform coordinator, bringing the shade, the bench or the banner to games, arranging tournament travel plans, first aid, volunteering as a chaperone during tournament trips, are just a few of the many ways in which a parent can make a very important contribution to a daughter's RAGE team.

Coaches and Trainers List for the Current Season:

A list of the current coaches and trainers can be found on the RAGE website, under COMPETITIVE, "Coaching Staff."

EVALUATIONS

Player evaluations (2 written evaluations per year via ZoomReports)

- U9-U14: player and parent must be present at evaluation with the Coach.
- U15 and up: parent has the option of being present at evaluation with the Coach. The Player Evaluation is a formal communication between a player and her Coach. It is also an opportunity for parents to hear what a player needs to do to perform to expectations. The Club provides Coaches guidelines to follow, suggesting that more information provided in a thoughtful manner is best, but as with most communications, Coaches will approach this sort of thing very differently.

The first evaluation may take place during League Season with the second taking place some reasonable time before State Cup. The timing is largely up to the Coach, but ample time to improve on shortcomings is the goal of this process. Evaluations should not be scheduled instead of practice.

In the past, we have had coaches who allow five minutes and give essentially glowing reviews to everyone. That is unsatisfactory, but, again, the Club and Technical Staff cannot control all means of communication. And, unfortunately, there may be a confrontational element to some of these meetings, which is uncomfortable for everyone. Good preparation by coaches, but also by players, will produce better results. Players, in advance of the meeting, we urge you to take some time to ask yourself what you want to know about your performance.

Player evaluations serve as an important ingredient in determining the following year's placement process. A player unhappy with an evaluation should discuss details with the Coach at a later time, to be sure of her position on the team. If a player thinks she might be on the bubble, it is incumbent on the player to ask the appropriate questions. There is no reason why a player should be surprised if she does not make the team at placements. This is a two-way street and the player needs to assume responsibility for knowing her team status. If you are among the bottom players on a competitive team, you should expect to be replaced the following season.

Player evaluations are turned over to the Technical Director for review and retention in team files. The following are questions that parents or players may have with regards to evaluations.

My daughter is a bubble player. What can I, as a parent, do to help her?

It is hard hearing that your daughter is on the bubble and this may be difficult for parents and players to accept. We all want our daughters to be successful, but as with schoolwork, the business world, and in life there are successes and failures. Parents may choose to meet with the Coach to find out why their player is on the bubble and what the Coach expects of her going forward. The Coach may suggest extra training or additional physical training sessions. Extra training will not assure your daughter of continued placement on a competitive team. You may also seek the assistance of a sports psychologist who is expert at goal setting. Most importantly when a player is on the bubble, parents need to provide emotional support and an understanding that playing on the competitive team is not a guarantee.

How do I give my opinions to the Club?

Prior to State Cup, the Club asks players and parents to participate in an important survey about the Coaches, Trainers and Club operations. This survey is administered by an independent company, Zoomerang. The sources of input are confidential. We encourage parents and players to participate, as this is a critical way for the Club to improve. It is also a means for the Technical Staff to hear and analyze the satisfaction of players in their coaches.

The RAGE Board makes decisions about the direction of policy in part based on several open-ended questions contained in the survey. Participation is actually pretty broad-based and we are thankful to those who give considerable thought to the process. However, individual comments regarding coaches/staff are not disclosed to the RAGE Board.

PLACEMENTS

Placements are among the most stressful days in the life of a competitive soccer player. A week or so after placements, players will be notified whether they have made a competitive team. RAGE has had a long history of fielding excellent teams. Players from other clubs are drawn to RAGE every year. Although we hope to maintain many Pleasanton girls on our teams, the facts are that the talent pool at placements gets bigger each year. Please understand that in competitive soccer, unlike recreational soccer, RAGE has a commitment to field the best competitive team possible.

The Technical Staff and the coach have reviewed in depth the qualifications of all players and will select those who show the most promise for a successful team. Skill, speed, agility, endurance, decision-making are all important components of the selection process, but so is commitment, coachability, team compatibility and dynamics, enthusiasm and other more subjective criteria. Soccer is a team sport and for that reason selection may be based on player attitude and team needs more than individual skills. Whatever the outcome of placements, RAGE appreciates the time the players have taken to attend our placements. We hope the process has been educational and that you will enjoy the coming season.

RAGE devotes considerable resources, financial and personnel, to our competitive teams. We have aggressively sought well-respected coaches to train our ECNL teams and to serve as trainers for volunteer coaches. If the proper training is provided and players make the commitment, we believe there is a great future for girls in these competitive programs, with opportunities to play soccer in high school and in college. Playing for RAGE, rest assured we WILL do everything reasonable to give you the right program, which will motivate you to exceed your expectations.

Parents, while your daughters are at placements, the Technical Staff and others are available to answer questions about our program. One of the important questions that people fail to ask about has to do with costs. Competitive soccer is expensive. For detailed financial commitment information, please see the RAGE website, under COMPETITIVE SOCCER, go to "Placement Schedule."

Placement sessions are opportunities for parents to ask all Club-related questions. Ask them separately or through email, but ask! It is important for families to understand all that is expected (financially and commitment level) of you before you make the commitment. Commitment to the competitive program requires the player to attend all games, all practices and all team-bonding sessions. See "Club Expectations" for more detail.

STATE CUP

State Cup is a tournament that occurs at the end of the league season. NorCal State Cup tournament is the culmination of our year-long effort at player development. At the younger age groups, U9-13, RAGE places less importance on the results of individual tournaments and only passing emphasis on League results; however, we do believe that State Cup is an event and we expect to experience success, especially at the older age groups, U14 and above.

State Cup for the younger age groups, through U11 occurs November through December, immediately after the League Season. U12-13 players participate in State Cup in January, and for high school players, U14 and above, State Cup occurs in March through May. A successful State Cup performance leads to inclusion in a Regional championship tournament held in mid-June, followed by a National competition in mid-July. RAGE teams have won several State, Regional and National championships. Almost every club in Northern California enters their competitive teams to State Cup, so the level of competition may vary.

TOURNAMENTS

Tournaments provide RAGE teams the opportunity to play against different opponents, many of which are highly skilled. It is essential that players see other styles of play offered at the best clubs on the West Coast and nationally. Tournaments are fun for players and families, as they are often strong team-bonding events. However, tournaments are an expensive competitive venue, many costing as much as \$1000 for team entry fees alone. Teams will absorb the travel costs of Coaches and Technical Staff. Travel costs can easily approach \$500-1000 per family for tournaments in Southern California. A single three or four game tournament may cost a family nearly as much as an entire season's worth of training.

All, or nearly all, RAGE competitive teams participate in NorCal State Cup and US Club sanctioned tournaments. Other tournaments, or jamborees (for younger's) will be determined by the Technical Staff and Coaches. Depending on age, prior success and the benefits seen by Coaches, a team may participate in two to four tournaments per year. At older ages, more tournaments offer the opportunity to be seen by more college coaches. Travel costs may become considerably greater as the best tournaments often are hundreds or thousands of miles from home. For example, some of the best tournaments are those in Washington DC, Houston, Dallas, Las Vegas and the Los Angeles area. Of course, one of the best tournaments for college exposure is the RAGE College Showcase in late-July. RAGE ECNL and Premier teams, U15 and up participate in the Showcase tournament, and the younger Orange and White teams participate in the Youngers Showcase tournament.

The Club believes it is very important for all families to stay in the same hotel while traveling to tournaments, thus eliminating any logistical problems. Team travel coordinators will block enough rooms for the team. It will be up to families to individually guarantee rooms with personal credit cards. Although it violates Club policy, there is a possibility that extenuating circumstances might preclude a family from staying at the "team" hotel. Please communicate those circumstances to the Coach. "I want to stay at a nicer hotel" is not justification. We do the best we can to find above average accommodations, but at a reasonable price for families on a budget. An added benefit when a team stays together at the same hotel, the players have valuable team bonding time.

A team attends tournaments for the purpose of playing soccer games. Coaches will clearly define their rules for those days, such as curfew, meals, rest periods, use of players' cell phones and acceptable

forms of entertainment. Appropriate behavior by players is expected. Needless to say, appropriate behavior is expected of all in attendance.

At no time should any player be alone in a coach's room. This is for the protection of players and coaches alike. A coach will not transport a player to or from the field.

It is expected that ALL players will participate in EVERY tournament. There will not be an a la carte methodology for attending these events. If a family cannot commit to attending all selected events, we suggest before a team is formed, or as soon as possible thereafter, the family communicate with the coach or Technical Staff to resolve this issue.

INSURANCE COVERAGE BY USCLUB SOCCER

If your daughter sustains an injury during soccer practice, games or tournaments, and your personal insurance does not cover costs incurred, you may be able to attain financial help through the US Club Soccer insurance policy. Go to the following web site:

http://www.usclubsoccer.org/main.aspx?sec_id=16&guid=014e8d84-d396-4575-8924-5d20489424e2

WEBSITES

RAGE Website

Go to www.Pleasantonrage.org for up-to-date Club activities and events, for soccer related articles or to contact RAGE Board Members.

NorCal Premier Website

Go to www.norcalpremier.com for information regarding the team playing league and schedules.

ECNL Website

Go to www.eliteclubsnationalleague.com for ECNL schedules and team information.

EGSL North Website

Go to www.elitegirlssoccerleague.com for EGSL schedules and team information.