

OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST STRIKERS POLICIES

1. TRYOUTS

Strikers teams for a given soccer year will be formed after potential players are evaluated at an open annual tryout, typically held around June 1. (Boys U15 through U19 try out in the fall for the following winter/spring program.) All players must try out. New players are welcomed and are evaluated on an equal footing with returning players; no spots are reserved for returning players. Players are evaluated by the Director of Coaching (DOC) and professional trainers working at the DOC's direction. The DOC makes all tryout decisions.

In exceptional cases, an alternate or make-up tryout may be held for players who miss the annual tryout, although no make-up tryout is guaranteed. The format and results of any alternate/make-up tryout, and the decision whether to hold one, are subject to the discretion of the DOC and the President.

During the soccer year following the tryout, a player may be moved from the team on which he or she was initially placed, at the time of tryouts, to a different team (e.g., from an Orange to a Navy team) based on the discretion and judgment of the DOC. Parents will be consulted before team placement is changed; however, parents agree at time of annual registration to abide by the DOC's team placement decisions, including any changes that may be made during the soccer year.

Playing up: Players aged U8 through U10 are not eligible to "play up" because it is considered developmentally unsound at younger ages. Prior to the tryout, team coaches and the DOC should meet to review any players U11-U14 who wish to play up. A player with an August birthday generally is not considered to be "playing up" if he or she tries out for a team composed primarily of his or her school classmates. However, such a player needs to try out for both the younger- and older-age teams for which he or she is eligible, since spots on the younger team are not guaranteed without a successful showing at the tryout session for that team. Decisions about "playing up" and all other tryout decisions are made in the sole discretion of the DOC.

2. TWO-SEASON COMMITMENT

By accepting a spot on a Strikers team roster, a player is making a two-season commitment to play fall and spring soccer (U8 through U14 ages). In addition, all players are expected to participate in the week-long preseason camp in August and in once-a-week winter indoor training sessions. Exceptions may be made by the DOC or President only rarely.

As part of the commitment they make when registering for a Strikers team, players and their families are committing to attend 100% of practices except for serious conflicts. The Strikers club will make reasonable efforts to accommodate other significant activities, especially for younger players, but will expect parents and coaches in other

sports to reciprocate by making equally reasonable accommodations to allow Strikers players to attend Strikers training and games.

In registering their child(ren) to play Strikers, all parents agree to attend a mandatory annual club meeting and pre-season team meeting conducted by their team manager. All parents agree to abide by the Positive Coaching Alliance pledge, which includes agreeing not to criticize referees and agreeing not to coach or provide any verbal instruction whatsoever from the sideline. Parents who do not live up to their commitment may be asked to leave the sideline and may be subject to more severe discipline, including expulsion from the club.

3. REFUND POLICY

The club follows a strict policy of not refunding fees, and parents should make sure they understand this policy before registering and paying the annual fee. There are a variety of sound reasons for this policy, including that a refund to one family increases the fee that must be charged to other families in the club. The no-refund policy is strictly enforced even as to players who change their mind shortly after registration. Under exceptional circumstances, such as a severe injury preventing participation for an entire season or a family moving away before the start of the season, requests for partial refunds will be considered. All requests for refunds must be submitted to the President in writing.

4. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Strikers club wants every player who earns a place on a Strikers team to be able to participate, regardless of financial means. Accordingly, the club will provide financial assistance to qualifying players, under the guidelines set forth below.

Criteria: Generally, the club will strive to award financial assistance where it would be difficult or impossible for the player's family to pay the entirety of the Strikers fee. Financial assistance is based on financial need, not ability. Financial assistance applies to the basic program for the soccer year – (1) pre-season camp; (2) fall and spring practices and games; (3) one tournament; and (4) winter practices – but does not cover “extras” such as additional tournaments, clinics for which a fee is collected, and optional winter indoor league play.

Procedures for making a request: Financial assistance must be requested in writing on (a) the OPRF Strikers Financial Assistance Request Form (click below for a copy), and also, for families living in the OP-RF communities, (b) the Youth Services of Oak Park and River Forest Township (YS) form. Players from other communities are asked to inquire and report back to the Treasurer if similar youth services funding programs are available in their home community. Applicants must work with the Strikers Treasurer (treasurer@oprfstrikers.com) to obtain and submit all required forms in advance of the date(s) set for registration and payment of dues. Financial assistance generally is awarded for one year at a time. Requests are reviewed anew each year

and awarded based on current showing of need and availability of funds. Due to the volume of requests, current Strikers families must submit their applications at least two weeks prior to the annual tryout or they will not be considered.

Amount of request: Requests for both 25-percent discounts and other awards will be considered. Some contribution generally will be expected from all players requesting financial aid, except in exigent circumstances.

Confidentiality: Requests for financial assistance will be treated confidentially by the Treasurer (and any other Strikers officials, limited to a need-to-know basis).

Availability of funds: Financial assistance may be constrained by the amount of funds raised and available specifically for that purpose, which the Strikers Board will assess from time to time.

Financial Assistance Request Form ([click here](#))

5. TOURNAMENTS

The club encourages teams U10 through U19 to play in one tournament each season (fall & spring). Orange level boys' teams generally are expected to participate in the annual NISL seeding tournament each August, unless excused by the Director of Coaching and President. Each team is entitled to reimbursement of the coaching fee and tournament fee for one tournament per soccer year. If a team participates in more than one tournament in a given soccer year, the coaching and tournament fees are not reimbursable by the club and must be paid by parents from that team.

6. AYSO AND SIMILAR LOCAL PROGRAMS

The Strikers club strongly supports youth soccer programs in our community such as Oak Park AYSO and River Forest youth soccer, and the Strikers board will communicate that support to coaches, team managers, parents and players within the Strikers club. Strikers will be positive and supportive of those players who play on both a Strikers team and an AYSO or recreational team at the same time. For example, if a Strikers practice and an AYSO game conflict, the player is encouraged to participate in the AYSO game. Strikers will make an active effort to communicate and cooperate with the AYSO board and coaches, and others associated with local recreational soccer programs, for the good of young athletes in our community.

7. ASSISTANT COACH POLICY

The Director of Coaching (DOC) and President must approve the appointment of any parent assistant coach in advance. In addition, they may dismiss an assistant coach at any time, in their sole discretion. No parent may serve as an assistant coach without

first (a) being interviewed and approved by the DOC and President, (b) passing a background check, and (c) passing the appropriate licensing class.

Generally, there shall be at most one parent assistant coach per team. Parent assistant coaches are approved for one year only, and must attend all mandatory meetings and be re-approved to serve as an assistant coach in subsequent years. The assistant coach should help enforce the professional coach's expectations for the team with players and parents (e.g., 100% on-time attendance at practice) and the consequences for players who don't meet expectations. In conjunction with the team manager and the professional coach, the assistant coach should explain the importance of participating in team events, such as pre-season camp, winter training, and tournaments.

Coach Training: The assistant coach must have the minimal required license (see IYSA and league rules) for the particular team. The club will reimburse the full amount, currently \$75, for the Youth module required by the IYSA of all coaches and assistants. Other coach training will be reimbursed 50% of the cost up to \$75, but for no more than one assistant coach course per team per year.

If the professional coach is absent from a game, the assistant coach will fill in as head coach. The assistant coach should shadow the professional coach at selected coaching sessions. The assistant coach will communicate with the professional coach on age-appropriate team tactics and strategy. The assistant coach may be asked to monitor specific aspects of the game and/or practice by the professional coach. This may range from child management at the younger age groups to monitoring or assisting with specific game or training elements with older age groups. However, the assistant coach may not communicate to players on the field during the game – tactical advice is limited to the head coach, both by league rules and by club policy – unless delegated by the head coach who remains silent.

For the assistant coach to operate effectively, it is crucial for him or her to understand and accept the limitations of the assistant coaching role. The key word is “assist.” The assistant coach is subordinate to the professional coach and must follow that coach's lead in all respects. For example, the assistant coach may or may not be on the sideline with the team during games, at the discretion of the professional coach. And as noted above, the assistant coach may not give verbal instructions to players on the field during games.

8. PROFESSIONAL COACHING ASSIGNMENTS

The assignment of coaches to particular teams in particular years is made in the sole discretion of the Director of Coaching. In general, the club's policy favors rotating coaches after one soccer year (sometimes two years) because of the consensus among leading soccer coaches and educators that fresh coaching perspectives benefit player and team development. Coaching assignments typically are made shortly before August pre-season camps, when the DOC is able to ascertain the various factors affecting coaching assignments (including coach availability and schedules), and will be

communicated to players and parents by the team manager at or near the start of training. Occasionally, a coaching change may be made during the soccer year, for a variety of possible reasons, including coaching availability and scheduling. Parents should expect that their child typically will have a different coach each soccer year. Occasionally, a professional coach may need to miss a regular-season game (or practice) due to an unavoidable conflict or illness. This is normal and should be expected to happen from time to time, in which case another professional coach or parent assistant will coach the game based on communication from the regular coach and will provide game feedback to the regular coach that can be used in upcoming practices. The coach for summer camp, winter indoor training, winter league play or tournament play may not be the same as the coach for regular league games.

9. EMAIL USE

The team manager will create an email list for each team. The purpose of the list (as well as the clubwide ListServ) is to convey information to parents from the club and the manager. Parents may also use the list for logistical purposes such as arranging carpools. In connection with the club's annual registration, the club asks all parents to agree in writing that they will not use the group email (a) for personal or business reasons or (b) to initiate suggestions or complaints about the manager, coaching decisions (such as strategy, playing time and playing positions), club policies and similar subjects. The reason is that group emails on such topics have only inflamed emotions and have hampered constructive discussion of, and resolution of, issues. Parent input about club policies is strongly encouraged, but instead of using group emails, parents are encouraged to express their views in-person at monthly Board meetings or the Annual General Meeting. (The volunteer Board lacks the resource to respond to individual emails given the size of the club, with more than 1,300 players and parents.)

10. INJURY REPORTING

An injury form should be completed within 24 hours and sent to the Executive Administrator in the case of an injury where the player cannot continue playing in a game or practice, or requires medical attention after the game or practice. Please contact the Executive Administrator who will provide the necessary form. Injuries that require immediate medical attention include: any eye injury; inability to use an injured extremity; any injury that results in loss of consciousness; loss of memory; excessive bleeding; broken bone, severe sprain or ligament tear; or any injury that the supervising adult feels warrants attention. Supervising adults should be aware of players who are allergic to insect stings or have a history of asthma that interferes with playing the game. Parents must inform coaches of how to intervene in these situations (e.g., use of inhalers, epipens procedure to follow).

Coaches and team managers should have a completed Medical Release and Liability Waiver for each player at all games and practices. Coaches have been supplied with a

standard first aid kit by the club and should have it available at all practices and games for minor injuries.

11. GOAL SAFETY

It is the policy of Oak Park-River Forest Strikers Soccer Club, Inc. to take all reasonable steps to check that goals are anchored and/or secured, and to comply with the Illinois Youth Soccer Association's policy/procedure on Goal Safety to the extent feasible. Procedures established in Sept. 2004 for checking goals will continue to be followed by the coaching staff, in coordination with the Executive Administrator.

Approved by Strikers Board: May 10, 2008