

A New Season in Every Way

I love soccer! I loved soccer since I got my first very own soccer ball from my Granny in England in 1970 and had popped it on some rose bushes in her yard the very first day I had it. I knew I loved soccer then because I cried and cried when my ball burst. It was a time when parents did not run off and buy another one because they felt sorry for me. Not even Granny offered. It was just the way it was. The perfect gift! Burst within hours! An empty feeling! I was born in England and though raised in Canada my mother often forgot that I was not an English boy and still sent me to school in brown leather dress shoes and long brown socks and beige dress shorts and button up shirt. I played soccer like this! I sometimes wondered why the other kids had snow pants on. But there I was, heading for the school bus in November quite out of place.

I loved soccer from an early age. I loved all sports but soccer was my favorite. I did not hear of the World Cup until I was at least 12 years old. I heard vague stories of teams around the world. Of England and Italy but none of it meant much to me. All I knew was that when I kicked the ball I felt good. I loved to run. So soccer was perfect! Kicking things and running, running and kicking things. I liked scoring too. I did not do it often because I was the timid shy kid that stood off a bit and kicked the ball when it came near me. But when it did come near me, the world stopped and it was just me and the ball. I love that feeling to this day!

The MSA season is about to begin. And for moms and dads it means schedules and drop-offs and carpooling and fitting in things into busy schedules. It means forgetting water bottles and shirts and questioning the coaches. It means sitting on the sideline squinting into the sun and standing in the pouring rain on the day that is sunny and warm except for the hour at the game. It means comparing our children with the other children, consoling losses and celebrating victories. It means determining whether this sport is good for the child's emotional and physical development.

But for the player it is about kicking the soccer ball. Kicking and running and running and kicking. Perhaps nothing more and nothing less than that. So let's not write a doctoral thesis on *the values of youth in sport this fall*, let's just enjoy watching our kids play soccer which comes down to kicking and running and running and kicking. Let's have fun watching this amazing thing that happens just because it is what it is...a simple game that our kids can learn to love.

So maybe this season, a new season, is about us, as parents, stepping back and letting the game do what it has done in the hearts of youth around the world for more than a hundred years.

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