

AM I READY for MSA Spring 2009?

Happy New Year! We are getting close to kicking off another MSA season. I just returned from St Louis and the NSCAA National Coaches Convention and though the snow is deep and temperatures cold I am in the mood for soccer. I am ready for that sun to warm the temps and I am ready to see spots of grass appear. I am ready to find my ball and pump it up or make that trip down to Wal-Mart or Dick's to see what new shiny tie-dyed ball my kid will talk me into buying. I am ready to pick out the dried mud on my kids' cleats. I am ready to hunt around the house for that one missing shin pad. I am ready to put my lawn chair in the trunk and find my hat and sunglasses. I am ready to locate the water bottle that was tossed into some box. I am ready to smell the spring air, see the kids with their new soccer balls, new shin pads, new cleats, new shorts, new shirts, new backpacks, and new water bottles arrive at the field to learn how to play soccer.

Yes, I am ready for them to arrive! But am I ready to teach? Am I ready to give them the new skills they need? Am I ready once they arrive?

For parents and coaches reading this, I can assure you that **I am ready and so are you!** Why? Because for youth, soccer is mainly about wanting the ball and then figuring out how to manipulate it to do what you want. Of course we teach the kids how to pass and shoot and support and be patient at times but really, the best thing we can do is let the kids get **as many touches on the ball as possible** individually and in small groups.

So whether your kids are playing in basements, playing in parking lots or in parks you can help them by encouraging them to practice with their ball. I have heard of some coaches telling their players to keep their ball with them at all times, even in bed, because the ball needs to become their best friend.

So as we enter this new season, my thought is to allow every player to practice their skills as often as possible each day and each practice. Let them dribble and dribble and dribble, turn with the ball and move it any which way they want. As they become confident with the ball they will become confident soccer players.

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