



A Model Soccer Program for Player Development



Program Philosophy

As Youth player coaches, our role is to develop our players both on and off the field. How do we ensure that is achieved?

- Help them be students first, athletes second
- Help them be responsible for their own academics
- Help them to be good, well-rounded, respectful people
- Help them to live a healthy lifestyle
- Help them to grow as a person while attending school.
- Help them to learn to give back to, and be a positive part of, the local community
- Help them to have healthy, and respectful relationships with ALL people, whether they are a part of our team or not.
- Help them to be the best that they can be, at everything that they do.



Program Playing Philosophy

Our playing philosophy is important and should be outlined and reinforced at the earliest age possible. How we train and the objectives we set daily, have a great impact on how our team plays. The objectives for training can be outlined as follows:

- Understand how we play soccer the Neenah SC program.
- Understand and apply how we play to prepare physically for that
- Achieve a level of technique that allows you to play that way
- Continually helping your fellow players by approaching every training session with maximum effort
- Conduct further training away from “official” training times in order to improve any deficiencies that may exist in your technique
- Put forth the effort to grow the program for those that come after you



The Program philosophy is extremely important to playing the game the way we want to. Doing this will allow us to work toward the following season to season objectives:

- Develop winning teams through long term development of each individual player's technical skills proficiency. Teach the kids ball mastery, and they will be better suited to understand and execute tactical plans later in their soccer life.

This should be done while:

- Respecting the game, our opponents and officials
- Sticking to our playing philosophy, allowing us to play the most attractive football possible while trying to achieve success
- Playing positively, with a sense of fun and enjoyment



Program Playing Philosophy

These are what we abide by, and hold nearest and dearest. They define our approach to the game on a daily basis and how we play the game when the opportunity arises. These are often described as our team agreements and are as follows:

- To play the most attractive soccer we can at all times
- To play with the same intensity at practice and in games
- To look to keep possession whenever possible, starting with the goalkeeper and progressing through the thirds
- To play with a positive, attacking attitude
- To dictate the tempo of the game, whether in or out of possession
- To regain possession at the earliest possible opportunity while maintaining defensive shape and organization



System of Play

Our system of play is important to us and is set to give us the best possible chance of winning games, while also developing well rounded, technical players. With each of our teams playing the same system, we are able to keep continuity throughout the program.

Our system:

- Refers to how the team is “laid out” on the field for each game
- Defines roles and responsibilities for players on the field
- Defines how we are organized on the field at a specific time and depending on the game situation
- May change during each of the 4 phases of play
- May change dependent on game situation or when deemed appropriate by the coaching staff



Style of Play

Our style of play is very different to, and more important than, our system of play. The style of play does not change, whatever the system we are set up in.

Our style of play is:

- Our approach and attitude toward the game
- The way we play the game, specifically when we are attacking
- Committing to, and abiding by, our team agreements



Phases of Play

There are 4 phases of play and each is important to every player, and their roles and responsibilities. As discussed, the phases of play have little impact on our style of play or team agreements but may greatly affect our system.

The 4 Phases of Play are explained as:

- Attacking Phase
- Transition Phase (Attacking to Defending)
- Defending Phase
- Transition Phase (Defending to Attacking)



Phases of Play

Attacking Phase

The attacking phase is considered to be any time that we are in possession of the ball and have an opportunity to attack. Within the attacking phase, we are looking to:

- Control the tempo of the game through our possessing of the ball (patience v penetration)
- Create space on the field, giving the best opportunity to ourselves and teammates to find areas on the field where they can be most effective
- Create chances to score goals
- Score as many goals as possible



Phases of Play

Transition Phase (Attacking to Defending)

This transition phase is considered to be any time that we lose possession of the ball and have to move from attack to defense as quickly as possible. Within this transition phase, we are looking to:

- Reorganize as quickly as possible to prevent opponents from attacking areas of weakness
- Pressure the ball as quickly as possible in order to stop quick counter attacks
- Win the ball back immediately, or at the earliest possible opportunity



Phases of Play

Defensive Phase

This defensive phase is considered to be any time that we have been out of possession for more than 5 seconds. Within the defensive phase, we are looking to:

- Make the opposition's play as predictable as possible through the way we pressure the ball, and the angles we take to do so
- Organize the team to use each other's strengths in order to defend effectively
- Take responsibility for the individual duties that we have within the team structure
- Avoid the opposition creating, and scoring, chances



Phases of Play

Transition Phase (Defending to Attacking)

This transition phase is considered to be any time that we win possession of the ball back and have to move from defense to attack as quickly as possible. Within this transition phase, we are looking to:

- Move forward at speed to exploit any weaknesses in the opposition before they can reorganize
- Keep possession of the ball if the opportunity to counter attack is not there.
- Build attacking play patiently, waiting for an opportunity to penetrate and attack any weaknesses that we notice.



Phases of Play

Playing our system the right way, and with a positive attitude towards our style of play, we have the opportunity to give our best in every phase of play that we find ourselves in.

Our system provides cover and balance all over the pitch. Our style means that if we are organized, we can compete with the very best teams that we play against.

When attacking, ALL our players must ALWAYS be in a position to be available to receive the ball

When defending, ALL our players must fulfill their defensive duties (pressure, cover or balance) dependent on where the ball is on the field



System of Play

The System of play that we will use through each level of our program is a 1-4-2-3-1, or, 1-4-3-3, as it provides numbers in both attack and defense across 4 lines rather than the standard 3 lines.

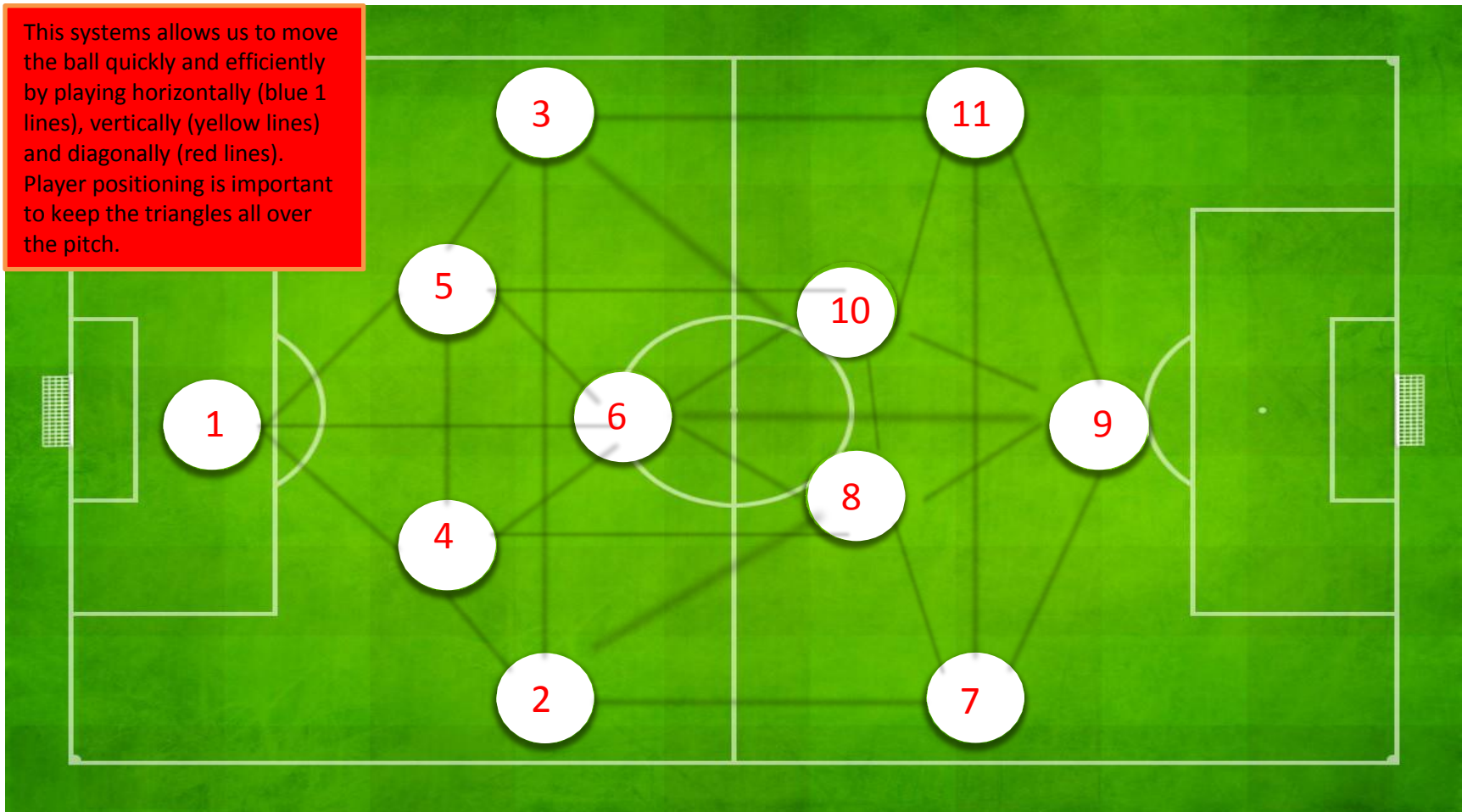


System of Play

This system allows us to move the ball quickly and efficiently by playing horizontally (blue lines), vertically (yellow lines) and diagonally (red lines). Player positioning is important to keep the triangles all over the pitch.



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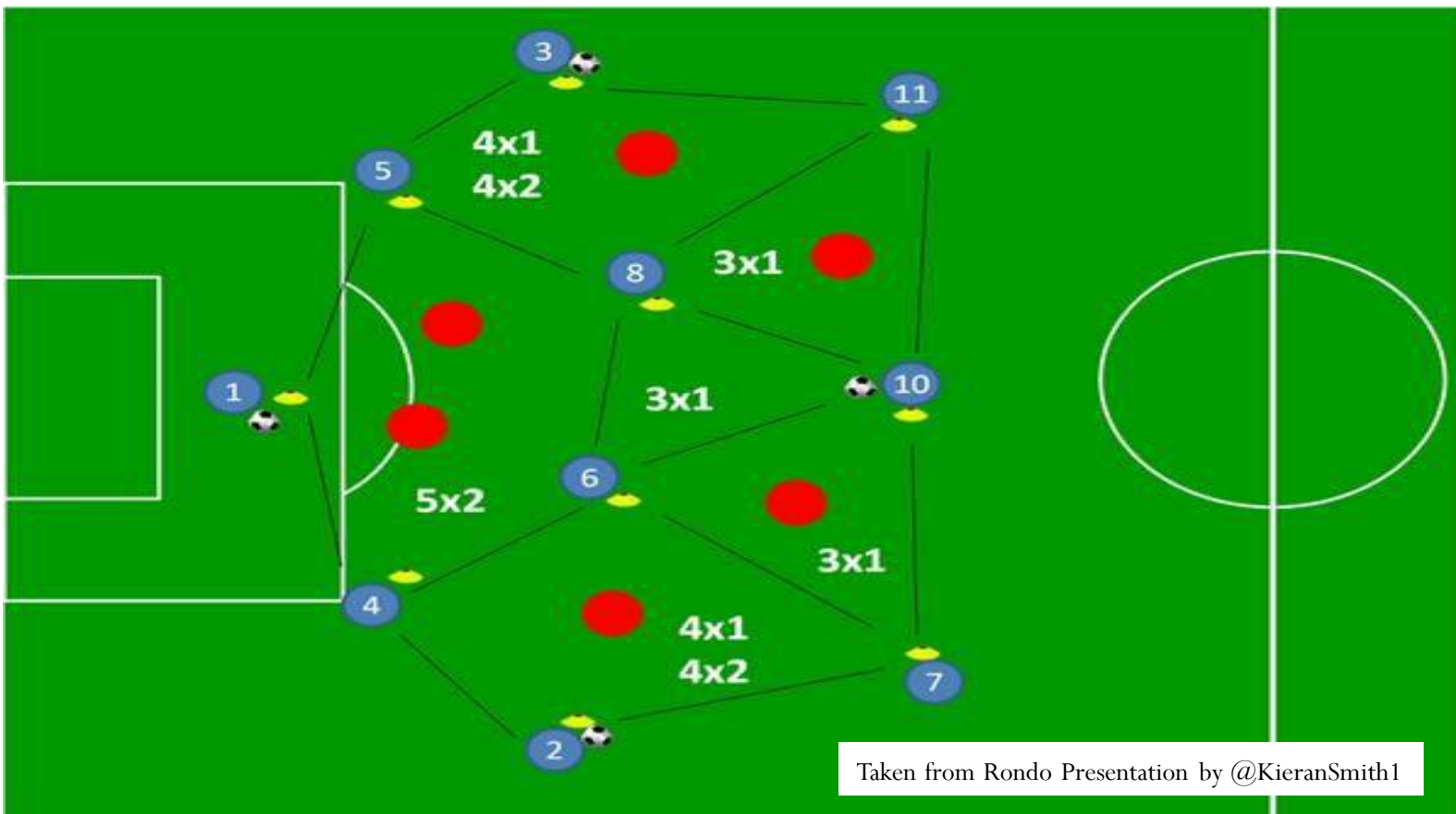
Player Movement

As it was stated earlier, while style of play is considered more important than our system of play, it also important that we move to allow space for each other on the pitch. Our basic shape should look like the one in our system but the movement of players is not restricted.

Rather, rotation of players and positions is encouraged in order to create space for teammates and to draw opposing players out of position. For example, if the #9 makes a move into the left channel, #10 or #11 should be looking to take his position at the top of the formation, with the other filling the Attacking Mid (#10) spot.

At the same time, our style of play dictates that we would like to create overloads in all areas of the pitch in order to maintain possession. These overloads can be seen in the following slide.

Player Movement - Overloads



Taken from Rondo Presentation by @KieranSmith1



Player Roles and Responsibilities

Defense when Defending

Goalkeeper (#1) - Control the defence. Act as a sweeper beyond the one we have. Last line of defence and first line of attack.

Full Backs (#2 and #3) – Needs to hold position and be capable of marking in a zonal system. One *could* be required to mark an opposing center forward on their side of the field so one of the CBs can be a spare defender.

Centre Backs (#4 and #5) – Mark in a zonal system. With the tendency nowadays to be teams playing with 1 central striker, 1 CB would mark while the other would provide cover behind them. When the ball is in the air, attitude would be the same with one attacking the ball while the other covers behind. Communication is key.



Player Roles and Responsibilities

Defense when Attacking

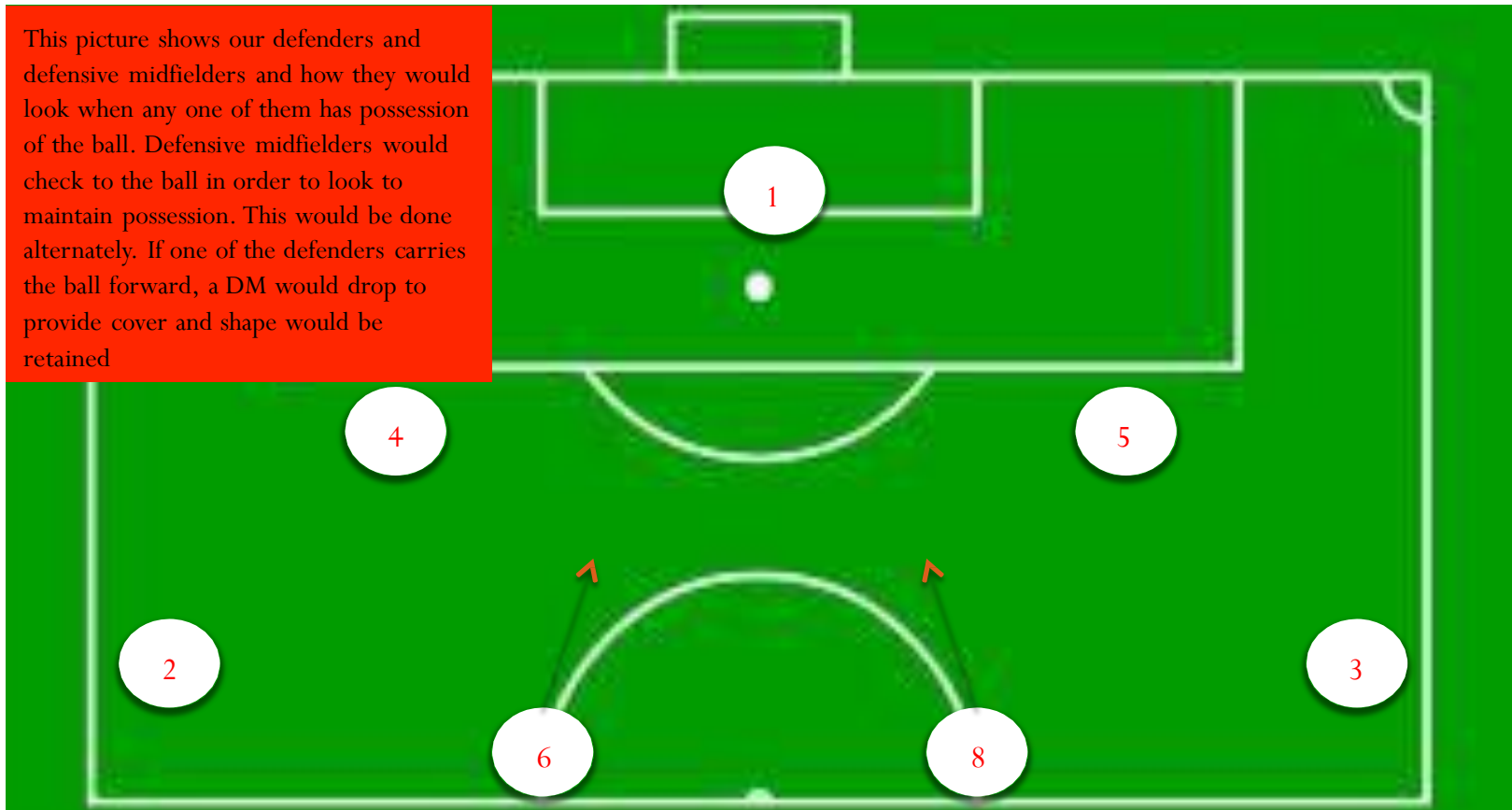
Goalkeeper (#1) - Control the whole team. Only distribute when you are ready. Punting should be a last resort. Look to build play from the back and keep possession with first pass.

Full Backs (#2 and #3) – Provide support to the wide midfielders by making overlapping/underlapping runs or giving them drop back options. Maintain width when the team has the ball and be an attacking option to everyone on the field.

Centre Backs (#4 and #5) – Split on the field out to the corners of the area when the goalkeeper has possession. Give depth, allowing players to play back and recycle the ball when necessary. Maintaining possession is key, especially when playing into the #6, #8 and #10. When the opportunity arises, and you aren't pressured, carry the ball into the midfield before distributing.

Player Roles and Responsibilities

This picture shows our defenders and defensive midfielders and how they would look when any one of them has possession of the ball. Defensive midfielders would check to the ball in order to look to maintain possession. This would be done alternately. If one of the defenders carries the ball forward, a DM would drop to provide cover and shape would be retained



Player Roles and Responsibilities

Midfield when Defending

Defensive Midfielders (#6 or/and #8) – Provide deep lying cover to full backs and midfielders. Rarely, if ever, get forward to support the attack and are mainly used to slow down the opposition breaking at speed. Need to be good readers of the game and have a knack of being in the right place at the right time. Don't need to be strong tacklers but nuisance players that stop the opposition from attacking the defense easily.

Attacking Midfielder (#10 and/or #8) - Spare man on defense that is used to either shut down full backs that look to bring the ball forward, deep lying CMs or to act as cover for an out of position **CM**. The angles taken when pressing the ball are important as this will help to **make** our opponents play predictable and channel the ball into areas where we can **win the ball back**

Player Roles and Responsibilities

Midfield when Attacking

Defensive Midfielders (#6 or/and #8) – Check to the ball when defenders are in possession, allowing us to play through the thirds. Turn and play forward whenever possible, maintaining a positive attitude in possession. Provide support to FBs in wide areas and to AMs and Wingers who are ahead of them. Be an option to all players on the field at all times.

Attacking Midfielder (#10 and/or #8) - Spare man on attack and the point through which the team should be looking to play. On attack, they should be looking to receive the ball in the space between the oppositions defensive and midfield lines, where they should be able to turn and dictate play. Look for through balls and slide rule passes in behind the defense for front 3 to run on to.

Player Roles and Responsibilities

Wingers and Forwards when Defending

Wingers (#7 and #11) - When defending, stay as high as possible to pin back the full backs on the opposing team. Must have high levels of fitness to track back should they FBs attack. Important role in pressing the ball as high up the field as possible and channeling opposition's play to make them predictable. At times, this will be towards the middle of the field. At others, it will be to force them towards the touchline and out of play.

Target Man (#9) – Another player with the important role of pressing the ball up the field as high as possible. When opposition are playing 2 CBs, angle taken to press the ball must stop them being able to play into other half of the field horizontally. Target Man's pressure should be looking to cut the field in half and force opposition up the middle of the field or out to the FB who is being pressured by the Winger on that side.

Player Roles and Responsibilities

Wingers and Forwards when Attacking

Wingers (#7 and #11) - Get forward to support the Target Man when he is in possession of the ball. Should maintain width when ball is on their side of the field and attack the far post when crosses come from the other wing. Can also look to make runs between the FB and **CB** when **AM** or **CF** have possession of the ball and are facing the opponent's goal. When in wide areas, they should look to get to the byline and deliver crosses by being confident in 1v1 situations. If playing inverted, should look to cut inside onto stronger foot and get shots on goal. Very attacking attitude when we have possession of the ball.

Target Man (#9) – Always looking to receive the ball and bring others into play. This can be done in a variety of ways. Balls can be played into the TM's feet with their back to goal with runners coming past them or TM can make runs into the channels and have other players rotate into his position. Can also look to play on the shoulder of the last defender and make runs in behind them. Looking to be in the middle of the penalty area when wingers are putting crosses in.

Conclusion

This is by no means a definitive guide. It is possible to go into much more detail with all aspects but this is a guide to assist our coaches in helping our Neenah SC athletes understand what is required of them if they play soccer for Neenah SC.

These guidelines are purely the opinions of the current Director of Coaching and are subject to change at any time. If they are to change, meetings will be held to explain the changes and why they are deemed important. The DOC will initiate any potential changes.

Any questions about anything within this presentation should be directed toward Director of Coaching, Lars N. Nordang.

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Credits: Based on “A Model Program” by Neil Cooper, head coach Lebanon boys soccer.

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