

Three Kings United Soccer Club

Guidelines for Selection of Junior Rep Teams, Players and Coaches

INTRODUCTION

We have rep teams in junior (ages 5-9) grades:

- To give our best players the chance to enjoy playing with other keen and able young players in an environment which is appropriate to their ability and offers them challenges better-suited to their level than those they find in their Saturday games
- To give players development opportunities in inter-club and tournament environments, often away from the usual TKU venues
- To give something for our young players to aspire to, and a reward for hard work or good performance and attitude
- To represent Three Kings United in the Soccer2 federation and beyond
- To showcase Soccer as a sport for other young players and enhance the level and profile of Soccer in Auckland and New Zealand

DUTIES

Grade co-ordinator (GC)

- To discuss the selection of rep coach(es) with the Director of Coaching and Junior Committee at the first Junior Committee meeting of each year
- To provide contact details of rep players to rep coaches (and Director of Coaching where necessary)
- To assist the rep coach(es) in finding a Manager for the rep team(s)

Rep coach(es)

- To communicate with rep players parents, regarding training times/dates etc (and progress of players where necessary)
- To run regular squad trainings through the season (after the Saturday game is a good time)
- To organize venues and equipment for trainings
- To find a parent who will manage the rep team. And to encourage other parents to get involved in the rep coaching sessions, and to support and help coach the team at tournaments
- To organize appropriate friendly games prior to tournaments where positional play can be taught, and players tried out in different roles.
- To select teams for tournaments, select players to positions, and coach the team at tournaments
- To organize a parent to referee at games and at tournaments
- To attend coaches meetings, and to report back to Junior Committee after each tournament – including brief summary of results, performances, support, problems, issues, things we could do better next time.
- To keep an ongoing dialogue with the DoC regarding the progress of individual players

Rep team manager

- To take responsibility for non-playing aspects of rep team organisation, such as transport, sponsorship, tournament certificates and entry forms

- Organising the set-up of tents/gazebo and other non-playing equipment
- Organising the collection of match results, number of corner kicks etc, as required

Saturday team coaches

- To let the Grade Co-ordinator know if they have a player who they think is good enough for rep selection
- To assist the rep coach by playing players in particular positions for part of some Saturday games if requested to do so by rep coach

Director of Coaching (DoC)

- To assist in the selection of rep coaches
- To run 6th grade trials for selection of players to rep squad
- To assist in other trials where possible, and provide expertise on trial format and selection criteria
- To assist rep coaches with selection of players to squads, and selection of tournament teams
- To assist rep coaches by taking a demo session with the rep coach, running coach education sessions, observing games, discussing positions, players and formations, or taking a tactical session pre-tournament
- To encourage all rep players to attend a high quality technical player development programme, such as the TKU Academy

SELECTION CRITERIA

To avoid confusion, and to help answer parents' questions about selection decisions, we need a criteria for the selection of players to rep squads and teams:

Ability	(technical, tactical, ability to play a particular position)
Attitude	(desire, enthusiasm, attentiveness)
Athleticism	(fitness, speed, strength)
Effectiveness	(contribution in games and at tournaments)
Commitment	(to the team and to trainings)

THE PROCESS

6th Grade

After three or four games of the season, the GC should ask Saturday team coaches for nominations of players to rep team. In recent years, we have got about 16-20 nominations. These players are invited to a trial on a Saturday at 9.30am, after the usual 6th grade Saturday game. The GC should let the DoC know how many players are attending and provide a list of names. The DoC will organize the trial, assessors and pitch set-up. The aim of the trial will be to select the A rep squad for special training during the year, and to represent TKU at inter-club tournaments. This squad will usually comprise between 7 and 10 players, depending on the depth of talent available.

Player assessment at trials needn't be complicated at this grade. It should be fairly straightforward to decide on the top players. If unsure, see the criteria for selection given above.

From the parents of players selected to the rep squad, a rep coach or coaches are selected. This will be mainly dependent on who puts their hand up to do it, but also who has the right abilities to manage the group and bring out the best in them. The DoC shall

try to find a suitable coach from parents of the best players at trial. Or the GC should find out who is keen to be the rep coach, and then discuss with the DoC.

The rep coach is responsible for taking rep team sessions through the season, and preparing the team for tournaments. The DoC is available to offer advice on this if needed. In the 6th grade, these sessions may only happen once or twice before each tournament. There will typically be about 1 tournaments for 6th grade rep teams each season, one being the TKU Invitational Tournament.

After roughly ten games, a second trial may be organized by the GC in the same way as above. Players already selected to the rep squad needn't attend. Players who were unsuccessful in the first trial may try again, alongside other players who are nominated by team coaches. The DoC and rep coach should attend this trial and help assess the players. From this trial, a B rep team is selected (typically 7 -10 players). At this point, a second rep coach needs to be identified to coach the B squad – typically a parent with a child in the B team.

Later in the season, players may still move in and out of the rep squad. Team coaches can still nominate players for inclusion, and the rep coach and DoC will need to discuss whether to include the player or not. A good way of assessing the ability of players at this stage is for them to join the rep coaches session on a trial basis and see how they get on.

7th, 8th and 9th Grades

At the first Junior Committee meeting of each year, the rep coach for each grade will be discussed. It is not necessarily the case, that the rep coach and manager from the previous year will continue in these roles. There may be changes due to player movement in/out of rep squads, or because there is a different coach who is keen to take the role. It is important that we find the right coach to look after our top players, and this needs to be discussed at Junior Committee at the beginning of each season.

Once the rep coaches are agreed, training sessions can begin. It is preferable to begin training early as this provides more learning opportunities before the first tournament of the year. However, many players may still be involved with summer sports or taking a break from soccer.

In 7th and 8th grade, the rep coaches will coach two teams to play up in the division above (7 aside so minimum of two teams of 7 needed). The teams will be an A team who will play in the top division, and a B team who will play in the second division. These games will follow on immediately from the usual Saturday games. It may be possible for the A and B 9th grade rep teams to play against 11th Grade Internal teams after their Saturday game, as part of the 11th Internal draw.

It is important that throughout the junior years, the rep teams can be added to, and players moved up/down to reflect changes in availability, playing position ability and attitude etc. This is especially important during the first few weeks of the season. Players who are new to the club, or those who have improved over the summer should be given the chance to join. This could be done in the following ways:

- the GC to ask team coaches for nominations, and then a trial is held to look at those who are nominated. This trial should be run by the rep coaches, and the DoC should be invited to help assess.

- Team coaches, parents or DoC recommendations may lead to one or two players joining the rep squad trainings for a week or two, so the rep coaches can see how they get on.
- Looking at comments / observations of previous years team coaches on end-of-season coaches report form

The total number of players in the rep squads may be about 20 (two groups of 10), but this will depend on the depth of talent in the grade.

The rep squad trainings need to happen regularly, although it is not essential that they happen every week in the 7th and 8th grade. It is a good idea to train before a tournament, including a friendly game.

Tournaments are usually played with goalkeepers, so players need to get used to this. The 9th grade top division also plays with GKs. It is strongly recommended that the rep coach identifies a keen goalkeeper and gets that player specific GK training, on the TKU Academy for example. One of the problems we have in the youth grades is not enough willing and able goalkeepers. This problem needs to be addressed early. With the right training and help, a keen 7 or 8 year old can be made into a very efficient goalkeeper who enjoys that position and contributes greatly to the team.

It is advised that rep coaches adopt a number system to help player adapt to positional play in a 7 aside (with GK) format. A very simple number system may be: Goalkeeper is 1, Defenders are 2 & 3, Midfield 4, 5 & 6, and Striker is 7. The DoC may be available to take a session on positional play and number system for the rep squad in preparation for a tournament.

The two squads in each grade are typically trained separately, although there is no reason why the two rep coaches cannot train their squads together. During the year, there should be opportunities for movement into and out of the rep squads, and to and from rep team A to rep team B.

In the 9th grade, rep players will be spread amongst teams in the top 9th grade division, and play 7 aside with goalkeepers. The rep squads will be added to over the course of the season with players from the top division. It is advised that rep coaches do not coach their own 9th grade Saturday team. This is so they can attend the top 9th grade division teams and observe players and performances. There may be players who come through from the division below, although this is highly unlikely to happen.

Toward the end of the 9th grade year, tournaments change from 7 aside with GKs to 9 aside with GKs. This means that each tournament squad will need to have 12 players. Therefore more players will be needed in 9th grade reps than in 7th or 8th grade.

It is advised that the rep coach (especially the rep coach of the top team) encourages the support of other parents in the group. It is a great benefit to team performance and to player development if there is more than one sideline coach during tournaments. Of course, the rep coach will need to ensure that advice from the sideline is appropriate and not conflicting.

Rep coaches need to discuss selection of tournament teams with the DoC, and keep an ongoing dialogue with the DoC on player progress. They also need to report back to the Junior Committee after each tournament.

QUESTIONS

What happens if the rep coach's child falls below the standard of the rep squad?

Player selection should come before coach selection. In other words, if a player is not good enough to be in the rep squad, then they should not remain in just because their parent is the coach. The GC needs to discuss this with the DoC if they feel this is the case, and the DoC will decide on a solution. The selection of rep coaches at each junior grade should be discussed at Junior Committee before the beginning of each season.

What happens if more than one parent wants to be the rep coach?

Rep coaches are selected before the beginning of each season depending on: who is keen to fill this role, past coaching experience at Three Kings, qualifications and experience, rapport with the players and parents, suitability to coach that age and quality of player.

The position of rep coach is contestable, and the Junior Committee will make a decision on who is best suited to the role. It is hoped that in the case of more than one parent wanting to take the rep team, the coaches can work as a team or a partnership.

Is the Rep Coach a member of the Junior Committee? Should the Rep Coach attend Junior Committee meetings?

The Rep Coach is not a member of the Junior Committee, and cannot take part in Committee voting processes. However, they are strongly encouraged to attend Junior Committee meetings. The Rep Coach – especially at 8th and 9th grade – may have a lot to offer to Junior Committee discussions about playing format and coaching structure. They may also find many Committee discussions relevant to their position as a tournament coach, and coach of some of the club's top players.

Who has the final say on player selection to a rep squad?

The rep coaches and the DoC together will have the final say on selection of all tournament teams and rep squads. It is hoped that in 99% of cases, they will reach an agreement on selection decisions. However, if there is conflict between the rep coaches, or between a rep coach and the DoC, then the top team rep coach will have the final say on selection.

In the case of any disagreement, it is strongly advised that there is proper discussion with the DoC, as the club often has to discuss selection decisions with parents afterwards and needs to be able to report to them accurately and in detail.

Are girls allowed to play in the 'boys' rep team?

Yes, if they are good enough. However, there are separate girls' rep squads at each grade, which will have their own tournaments. If there are boys and girls tournaments at the same time, and a girl has proven good enough to be selected to teams in both tournaments, then the girl and her parents will have to decide which one to take part in. The DoC can offer advise to parents on this matter.

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