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"The RYSL Rug Rat Program Overview"

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It is, by far, the most important and exciting program you can get your child involved in when they are just beginning their "Interactions" with other children, and just starting out in "Organized Sports", or any "Organized Activity" for that matter. Designed to enhance each child's balance and coordination, as well as developing their motor function and interpersonal skills.

1. Young 2 and 3-year-old children have a very short attention span and haven't developed the concept of **sharing** yet. They are very selfish with their "possessions" and the very concept of "sharing" is foreign to them. Since Soccer is a TEAM sport, they have to learn to "share" the ball with other children, which is not normal at that age. Although we don't "force" the idea of "sharing" (passing) the ball, we put them in certain situations where they begin to feel more comfortable doing it.
2. They have a lot of **Interests** going on in their young minds when they are on the soccer field (if they even go on the field). They might be more interested in the 'dandelion' blowing in the wind or the butterfly fluttering by them than the soccer ball they are playing with. That is very normal, and they should be allowed to pursue those interests for that short period of time. (If they were thrown into a Game environment right away at these ages, they wouldn't be able to pursue those interests and their curiosity and overall development would be thwarted).
3. Knowing this, we have designed a program that will **'ease'** these young children into a Sport that is very **'team oriented'** and very **'parent crazy'** (meaning the parents are constantly yelling instructions at the children on the field and to the ref, when they don't agree with the call).
4. In a traditional Soccer League, they start a child out as young as 3 to 3 1/2 years of age in a "Game" environment and expect them to be able to understand the concepts of **"sharing"** (the ball), **"interpersonal relations"** (understanding that the player next to them is a teammate and they need to work together), **"interpretation"** (learning the Rules of a Game that is completely "foreign" to all other American Sports in that you can only use your feet and not your hands), **"selectivity"** (being able to "tune" out the spectators and only listen to their coach), **"compartmentalize"** (being able to separate all the confusion on the field with what they have learned so far about the Game of Soccer and actually **"play"** the Game of Soccer with all of the parents yelling at them), etc, etc, etc...
5. As you can see, that is a **"Tall Order"** for anyone, let alone a 3 to 3 1/2-year-old just starting out in soccer. Now bring it down to the 2 to 2 1/2-year-old level and you can see why it is so vitally important to "ease" the child into this sport through this kind of a program.
6. So, in the **RYSL Rug Rat** program, we don't **"throw the little ones to the wolves"**! Instead, we have a program that brings them along slowly in understanding what they are doing at the Soccer Park and how they address each of the issues mentioned above, along with many others.
7. IT IS FOR **"FUN"**! **Please, Please, Please, Please, Please** understand this. It is **"All about the kids having FUN"**! If they don't have **FUN**, they won't want to come back and play again, or they

will be so beat down that even if they do play for a while, they will eventually quit, and the Sport of Soccer ends up losing, along with the child.

8. We accomplish this by:
 - A. **NOT** having any practices during the week. We want them to look forward to coming to the Park at **9:20 am every Saturday** that they are scheduled.
 - B. **NOT** having any organized Soccer Games for that age. We want them to "**associate**" this to any other normal "**Play Time**" activity that they "**want**" to participate in. The "main" reason that the US doesn't do well in the World Cup is that we lack "creativity" in our players. We are so "structured" in our approach to the Game of Soccer that we take away the ability for the children to become "creative" in the way they play the Game. We actually stymie their growth and development.
 - C. **NOT** "yelling" at or "criticizing" the children. Everything is done in a "**positive**" manner by the coaches and the parents.
 - D. **NOT** "expecting" anything other than for the children to come out and have an enjoyable and **FUN** activity on a Saturday morning.
 - E. **CHEERING** them on when they show up in their "colorful" uniforms and fun shoes.
 - F. **TEACHING** the "**skills**" of the Game of Soccer "slowly" so the children actually "learn" them and can use them in the Game without really knowing that they are learning them in the first place. How to dribble with the ball; then how to dribble next to a teammate who is running down the field with them (so the teammate doesn't take the ball off their foot); how to pass a ball to a teammate; and then, how to receive a ball from a teammate (remember, they are very "possessive" at this age and really don't want to share); how to treat a teammate (they haven't developed those "sharing" skills yet), etc., etc., etc. (Ironically, these same "skills" are going to carry over in their "none sport" life and help them to become a much more well-adjusted child.
 - G. **KEEPING** the segments short and then changing to something else rapidly to keep their attention.
 - H. **PROVIDING** "treats" and other fun "activities" during the season to keep their interest level high so they really "**want**" to come to the Park at 9:20 am every Saturday morning they are scheduled. Trunk or Treat-Fall; Eggstravaganza Egg Hunt-Spring.

As you can tell by the above narrative, we have a tremendous "**passion**" for our young RYSL players and it isn't about winning Soccer Games. We stress **FUN** because we want them to be able to develop into solid citizens and future leaders of this great Country and to become **EVERYTHING** they want to become. By stressing the **FUN**, they develop that creativity in their own mind and grow accordingly.

It they want to pursue a career in Soccer, so be it. If they only want to use the Game of Soccer as a recreational release, so be it.

In other words, we are not here to "legislate", at an early age, or at any age for that matter, what these children should become. We are here to provide a **FUN**, clean environment for them to make their own decisions and to use the RYSL as one of their "Growth Experiences" in their life.

That is what the **RYSL Rug Rat Program** is all about.

Families in the **RYSL Rug Rat Program** will be contacted after the pre-season coaches meeting (when the coaches get their rosters and uniforms), during the week before the season starts. They will then let you know when you can get your uniforms and each team can decide on who is going to be the Team Mom (for treats), etc. Most of their activities will be on Saturday morning at 9:20 am on the Yellow Ball fields during the Saturdays they are scheduled. The other major RYSL activities that they are also invited to are at different times. There are **NO** double headers in the Rug Rat program because we don't want to keep them past what their attention span can handle.

See you on the soccer pitch...