



President's View

On your mark ... get set ... yes, it's that time already. Well, it's almost that time ... for the start of the spring season. While you and your kids have been busy with other pursuits or with winter indoor soccer, the Board and staff have been busy trying to stay at least a couple of steps ahead.

Josh Sheldon, our Director of Coaching, has already held his first coaches' meeting for the spring and has coaches in place for each team. We've already asked him to begin putting together a winter training program for next November so that we'll have something more formal to offer our players next year. By the time you read this, Linda Sellman and Laura Bowman, our co-Registrars, will have already registered our spring teams. Shortly, Leanne Miller, our Treasurer, will be issuing checks to each of the team managers to cover the referee fees for the upcoming season. And, believe it or not, we have placed an order for next year's uniforms. Finally, we will be forming a committee soon to plan our June tryouts.

Running this club takes lots of planning, organization, AND volunteers. We've been blessed with an outstanding core group of board members and volunteers who always do more than asked, and not to mention the wonderful job performed by our team managers and coaches. This club couldn't survive without all of them. I thank each of you who volunteer your time and talent and ask those of you who haven't volunteered yet to consider doing so. I promise you'll be appreciated. We will be calling you.

I've been the president of the club for almost 6 months now and I'll be the first to admit that it's been a learning experience for me. Nonetheless, I think the board (largely through no fault of mine) has made some very positive changes in that time. Hiring a club administrator, Ken Coviak, to handle day-to-day issues sets us apart from many other clubs. Our reason for hiring Ken was to be more responsive to all of you. I can't begin to tell you all the matters he deals with between board meetings. I'm not kidding. I really can't, because he anticipates so well and usually handles matters before they become urgent. We hope you've noticed. If you have an issue or question, Ken can probably answer it.

We're also very pleased with the way Josh Sheldon has tackled his role as our director of coaching. As

many of you may know, we've had some turnover in this position. In large part it was because the Board (myself included) didn't adequately define just what it was we wanted in that position. And in some cases we simply asked too much. That was unfair to the director of coaching. We hope we've remedied that. We think we have. Having Ken in place allows Josh to focus on coaching and training matters. Josh and the Board also agreed upon a formal review process every six months in order for us to reevaluate our working relationship. I will tell you that Josh and I meet regularly in order see that expectations on both sides are being met.

I hope these changes have been positive for you. If not then let me know. You and your child are the only reason I'm here. My phone number is listed on the back of this newsletter. I promise to listen to you carefully. I, and the whole Board, want your input. Honest.

Thanks for being a part of GRASA. And now, let's get ready for spring.

Paul Clemens, GRASA President

Coach Gift Suggestion

It is traditional for many teams to present gifts to the coaches and managers at the end of the year as a token of appreciation for their efforts. Gift certificates, soccer sweatshirts, a video tape of the 1986 World Cup finals, these are all great gifts. Most coaches would also appreciate having a team photo. Maybe a 5x7 for a scrapbook, or an 8x10 to hang on the wall in the den, perhaps mounted in a nice frame. The players could all sign the back. Or the photo could be mounted with a wide mat, and the players could sign the mat around the photo.

This is something that you can't do at the last minute. It takes a bit of planning. Getting a team together and taking a picture is the first challenge. If you plan it for a particular week-end, such as before a game, it is sure to rain, so start early enough that you can make alternate plans as needed. After you get a nice team photo, the remaining steps are pretty obvious (and don't depend upon the weather), but allow enough time to get things done. If this is something that your team wants to do, the time to start planning is at the beginning of the season.

Brewer Park Update

The Brewer Park Soccer Association has been hard at work getting ready for the opening season of the new complex. They have hired Debbi Wollard as Field Director to manage the fields. She will be responsible for coordinating the maintenance of the fields, including fertilization, mowing, and striping. She will also handle the scheduling of the fields.

The association has hired John Corbett to schedule referees for games at the fields. John has scheduled referees for GRASA for many years, and also for PASS for the last several seasons. As he takes on additional responsibilities with Brewer Park, he will also continue to schedule our games at the Sunshine field and the PASS games also. He has done an excellent job in the past, and we are happy to see him in this new position. Due to his new responsibilities, he has resigned from his position on the GRASA Board of Directors.

The goals are being delivered on the first week of April. A storage shed is being built to store nets, flags, field paint, and other items. Debbi is trying to hire someone to paint the field markings on a weekly basis.

They have decided to set up one of the large fields as two small fields (U9-U10) instead. For this spring, the complex will have 4 full size fields and 2 small fields. GRASA has already made arrangements with Sunshine Church to use their field this spring for the U9-U10 games, and we plan to follow through with that.

Games will be played at Brewer Park from the beginning of the season on April 19. An official opening celebration is scheduled for May 17.

A few people have commented that Brewer Park will be a longer drive for them than the Grand Rapids parks fields. Remember that this change only affects the four home games of the season. This is quite a bit different than the affect of the practice field location, to which you might travel 20 times or more during the season.

From the Registrars

As registrars, we are asked many questions about the club size, divisions, colors, and such. We will provide information to the more frequently asked questions below.

2003 GRASA Spring Registration

22 Teams (9 Girls, 13 Boys)
with about 340 players

2002 GVSA Fall Registration

26 Clubs
231 Teams

Number of Players on a Roster

U9, U10 – minimum 10, maximum 14
U11 & Up – minimum 13, maximum 18

Girls U15 and above play club soccer in the fall. For spring season these girls will play on school teams. The reverse is true for Boys U15 and above. We have added 6 new Boys U15 and above teams for spring.

Questions always arise about team colors when the game schedule is posted. In any given age group GRASA forms a White team first. If there are enough players, an additional Blue team is formed. GRASA teams play in various divisions under GVSA, depending on the level of competition chosen by the coach. GVSA also uses a set of colors to designate these divisions when preparing the game schedule. Their division names begin with *Elite* as the most competitive, followed by *Blue*, *Yellow* and *White*. This becomes confusing, such as the example of a GRASA White team listed on the GVSA schedule under the *Blue* division.

If you have additional questions, or suggestions for future newsletters, please contact us. We enjoy hearing from you and appreciate feedback.

Linda Sellman, Boys Registrar
Laura Bowman, Girls Registrar

Spring 2003 Teams

Girls Teams:

U9 – Hamdi Rammal
U10 White - Chip Bowman
U10 Blue – Tim Wolffis
U11 White – Hamdi Rammal
U11 Blue – Laura Hamlyn
U12 White – Todd Stacy
U12 Blue – Lawrence Murray
U13 – Sarah Derrico
U14 – Tanya Koser

Boys Teams:

U9 – Scot Van Airsdale
U10 White – Clark Udell
U10 Blue – Lena Baldwin
U11 – Chris Barlow
U12 – Scot Van Airsdale
U13 – Alberto Chavez
U14 – Mark Stacy
U15 White – Randy Sahajdack
U15 Blue – John Hall
U16 White – Matt Roberts
U16 Blue – Pat Doyle
U17/18 White – Evan Dufendach
U17 Blue – Todd VanThomme

Referee's Call

Who You Gonna Call?

Ok- I stole that line from the Ghostbusters. But it is a good lead-in. You have your new referee certification from USSF. Now you have to decide whether to wait for an assignor to call you, or to call the assignor yourself. If you wait, you may wait, and wait and wait. If you want to call an assignor, which one will you call? Why should you want assignments from a particular club?

"Why should you choose the Brewer Park Soccer Club?"

Better still:

"Why you should choose the Brewer Park Soccer Club!"

You should shop for the club that offers the following opportunities. When you shop clubs, remember that your point of contact with the club is its Referee Assignor (RA). Also remember that you should only accept assignments from certified assignors- for your protection as well as the club's. The RA can be one of your best resources to help you increase and sharpen your referee skills, as well as to help you obtain and document games for upgrade purposes. Especially for new referees, the RA is one of the most important people that the referee will have to deal with.

1) Look for a certified assignor that you think is open, easy to talk to, and is willing to take time to take into account your refereeing needs and skills. The assignor should be willing to help you start out and progress through games, schedule you with experienced referees who can mentor (or at least coach) you, and be accessible to answer questions you might have about the Laws, game situations, or how to handle problems. The RA should also initiate contact with you for feedback on how your assignments have worked out, to relay compliments from coaches or other referees, or about complaints that have been made. Not every complaint is valid- but the assignor needs to sort which ones merit further attention, and review the matter with you. Ignoring issues, or assigning you fewer games without feedback, does not help you become better and it does not help the club. Similarly, if the complaint does not merit further attention, that decision needs to be directed to the complainant.

2) Look for a club that has, or is creating, a program to review/evaluate referees who ask for, or need, the service. This should be done by assigned referees who are there to review, not working the game and trying to watch you at the same time. Your feedback should be immediate, concise, and positive. At most there should be no more than three suggestions for improvement, and three items that you are doing well. There should also be an opportunity for a second review/evaluation to observe how well you are progressing. Evaluations by coaches, managers, and parents typically are not

neutral, and frequently these people do not have the knowledge/mastery of the rules, practices, procedures, and techniques to evaluate your performance.

3) Look for a club that offers a large number of games and a large number of age groups. You should have enough games to keep busy, but enough age groups that as your skills progress, you can be assigned to more competitive games. If you have difficulty as you progress, it is good to be able to stay at a given level or return to the prior level to rework skills until you believe it is appropriate to request a more difficult assignment.

4) Choose a club that has experienced referees who are willing to work with less experienced referees- either as mentors, or on the field of play. This gives you the opportunity to link with other referees, and ask questions about style, game management, calls, etc., in real time.

5) Choose an assignor that will take the time to find out which assignments you like and don't like, and what you're comfortable doing. It may not always be possible or practical to honor those preferences, but at least the assignor can try to do the best he can with your assignments.

6) Referees who quit will generally do so within the first two years. The reasons are typically that they do not have contacts that they can use for support, feedback, or review. They also cite difficulties with parents and coaches, and sometimes the players. Attending to items 1-5 will directly address those issues, and will help minimize the times that a referee will quit, who actually would like to stay with the game.

7) Choose an assignor that tracks your game assignments. You will need this information if you apply for an upgrade, and it is useful when reviewing games and your progress.

At the present time, the Brewer Park Soccer Club offers these resources to its referees. Although there is not a formal evaluation/review program for referees at this time, there is a group of referees who are qualified and willing to perform evaluation/review for a referee. Good luck this season to all of you.

John Corbett, Certified Referee Assignor, Brewer Park Soccer Club

Spring Calendar

April 19 – GVSA Spring 2003 games begin

May 17 – Brewer Park official opening celebration

June 14 – Spring season games end

June 15 – Club tryouts begin

Third Monday of each month – GRASA Board meetings are held at East Hills Athletic Club, members are welcome

U11 Girls National Indoor Soccer Champions

The GRASA Girls U11 White team traveled to Dublin, Ohio on February 8th and 9th to participate in the National Indoor Soccer Championship Tournament. The Magic girls came home the winners of Division 2. The Magic played 4 games to take the title and showed no losses. Teams defeated by the Magic included the Hilliard Sharks (Columbus, Ohio area) with a score of 10-1. The Blizzard Extreme was a team that traveled all the way from Laramie, Wyoming to be defeated 5 to 0. The toughest game of the tournament was against the Ontario, Canada team, the Redgales. The Magic won that with a 4-2 margin. The final game for the title was against Lakeshore Express (Tri-Cities area...also known as Tri-Cities Strikers with some additional players). The Magic hammered the runners-up with a score of 9-1.

The U11 White team is under the direction of Coach Hamdi Rammal with assistance from Kevin Jones, Alan Dulyea, and Jeff Peterson. Members of the U11 Championship Team were: Chelsea Peterson, Elaine Cunningham, Nicki Keller, Natalie Anderson, Amanda Foster, Madeline Rammal, Kristina Osipoff, Sara Ventimiglia, Sarah Hammond, Brittany Dulyea, Kaely Schlosser, Kinsey Bykerk, Katie Clarkin, Candice LaCross, and Erika Boll. Erin Jones and Kate Scott are also on the team but were not able to make the tournament.

Contributed by Sheila Schlosser, team manager

Other Team News

What has your team been up to? Maybe it isn't as dramatic as the U11 girls with their trip to Dublin, but we would love to hear about it. Have your manager, coach, supportive family member, or player send the info to newsletter editor Ken Coviak. (Contact information is on the back page.) It doesn't have to be polished, that's what editors are for. Share your team news with the rest of us!

And have you noticed that every team has their own web page under the GRASA website? Start at the home page at www.eteamz.com/GRASA and in the left panel, click on "Teams". When the list of teams comes up, click on your favorite team to go to their web page. Check out the Girls U11 White for an example of what you can do with your team web page. And yes I did say "You" can do it. Your team can easily customize your web page as you like, with news items, photos, or whatever your imagination can come up with. It is easy to get started, and you can keep it simple or really get carried away. Contact Ken Coviak to express your interest, and he can get you started.

Tournament Tips

Plans for the spring tournaments are well underway. By this time, the teams should have submitted their tournament applications, and hotel reservations should have been made for the team. Usually a credit card number is required to hold each room reservation. If reservation cancellation information is not provided, be sure to ask for it. Cancellation policies and deadlines vary greatly by tournament and hotel.

Staying with the team can be a lot of fun, for both players and families, and it is a good way to get to know the other families on the team. However, some families will choose to handle their own accommodations. They may stay with family or friends in the area, or they may opt for more economical choices. If you do this, be sure to let your manager know, and also provide the manager with a phone number where you can be contacted while staying at the tournament.

Most tournaments will schedule each team for three bracket games, usually with two games on Saturday and one on Sunday morning. (Sometimes games are scheduled for Friday evening, and generally the more local teams are scheduled into these slots.) The top team in each bracket will generally advance to the semi-final or final games on Sunday afternoon. The game schedules usually become available two or three weeks before the tournament. Some tournaments will post the game schedule on their tournament website as soon as it is available.

Some teams may be scheduled such that their first game will be late Saturday morning. When this occurs, some families will undoubtedly decide to drive to the tournament on Saturday morning instead of Friday evening. Remember that the block reservations made for teams will usually require a two night minimum stay. Families that may want a one night stay would be better advised to make their own room arrangements rather than to book their room with the team.

The GRASA website (www.eteamz.com/GRASA) has a *Tournament News* page which may contain additional tournament information, especially for the club tournaments. This may include team assignments by hotel, links to hotel web pages (for hotel maps and accommodation info), links to tournament web sites, and links to other features of the tournament city or area.

Overheard at the field...

After a goal is scored, a spectator says that it shouldn't count because the player was in the goal box when he kicked it in. (Wrong sport – how about them Redwings, eh?)

Spring Tournaments

The tournament selections for the spring teams are:

<i>Boys Team</i>	<i>Tournament</i>
U9 (VanAirdale)	Petoskey
U10 White (Udell)	Canton
U10 Blue (Baldwin)	No spring tournament
U11 (Barlow)	Canton
U12 (VanAirdale)	Petoskey
U13 (Chavez)	Canton
U14 (Stacy)	Midland
U15 White (Sahajdack)	Petoskey, State Cup, KISS?
U15 Blue (Hall)	Canton, Saginaw
U16 White (Roberts)	Canton
U16 Blue (Doyle)	Canton
U17/18 White (Dufendach)	State Cup
U17 Blue (VanThomme)	Canton
<i>Girls Team</i>	<i>Tournament</i>
U9 (Rammal)	Miami Spring, Canton
U10 White (Bowman)	Petoskey
U10 Blue (Wolffis)	No spring tournament
U11 White (Rammal)	Miami Spring, Canton
U11 Blue (Hamlyn)	Petoskey
U12 White (Stacy)	Midland
U12 Blue (Murray)	Canton
U13 (Derrico)	Petoskey
U14 (Koser)	Canton

The spring tournament dates are:

Miami (of Ohio) –
April 25, 26

Midland Tournament –
May 9, 10, 11

21st Annual Canton Cup –
May 23, 24, 25

21st Annual Petoskey Soccer Invitational –
June 13, 14, 15

Saginaw 7-Eleven Soccer Classic –
June 20, 21, 22

Kalamazoo Invitational Soccer Showcase (KISS) –
June 20, 21, 22

State Cup –
Bracket games are arranged between teams,
between April 12 and May 11
Midland games (U12-U14) – May 17 and 18
Saginaw games (U15-U18) – May 31, June 1
Semi-finals – June 7
Finals – June 8

GRASA Logo Clothing

You may have noticed some of the sharp looking GRASA logo clothing items being worn around the soccer courts. Bonnie Desrosiers has been producing these clothing items for us. Sample items are being displayed in the store at the front of the Soccer Spot. To order the items, ask at the store for an order form. Fill out the form, and return it at the store with payment as indicated on the order form (checks only please, no cash). After Bonnie has completed the items, she will contact you and arrange to get the items to you either directly or through your team manager.

One of the wonderful benefits of having the items custom made is that there is an opportunity to personalize the shirts, sweatshirts, and jackets. Bonnie has been very willing to add names across the back, front, or sleeve, or initials, or player number, or team name, or whatever. The next time you are in the Soccer Spot, stop in at the store and take a look at the samples.

Risk Management

The Michigan State Youth Soccer Association has developed a Risk Management program, which is applicable to all leagues, clubs, and teams which are members. This includes all GVSA clubs and teams. The goal of the program is to identify and minimize risks to participating members.

One aspect of the program involves the administration of background checks for all club officials who may be involved with young soccer players. Every coach, assistant coach, manager, board member, or other club official is required to submit a form giving permission for a background check. When the check is completed, a Risk Management card is issued to the official as evidence of the completion of this requirement. All Michigan tournaments also require that all coaches and managers present Risk Management cards before they are allowed to participate.

Another aspect of the program involves education. Information has been assembled and made available on a variety of safety related topics. These include:

- Prevention and awareness of abuse in youth soccer
- Principles of conduct
- Handling bloodborne pathogens
- Soccer goal safety
- Lightning safety outdoors

These materials and other information on the Risk Management program are available on the MSYSA web site at www.msysa.net, select the Programs pull-down menu, and select Risk Management.



PO Box 232
Ada, MI 49301

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To Our Friends:

GRASA Board of Directors:

Member:	Position:	E-mail Address:	Phone:
Paul Clemens	President	Paul.Clemens@53.com	575-0515
Laurie Wilson	President Emeritus	LWW920@attbi.com	245-6973
Sheila Schlosser	Secretary	schl89@aol.com	
Leanne Miller	Treasurer	Leanne.Miller@earthtech.com	957-8905
Linda Sellman	Boys Registrar	sellmansix@attbi.com	956-8016
Laura Bowman	Girls Registrar	laurabowman@attbi.com	956-3379
Josh Sheldon	Director of Coaching	jsheldon7@juno.com	464-1000 x17
Ken Coviak	Communications	Ken.Coviak@attbi.com	676-2873
Mary Brandon	Tournament Coordinator	maryb@asrcorp.com	
Mike Petrusma	Field Coordinator		942-2218
(open)	Equipment Coordinator		
(open)	Fundraising/Sponsorship Coordinator		
(open)	Try-Out Coordinator		
Club administrator:	Ken Coviak	Ken.Coviak@attbi.com	676-2873 (evening)
Referee coordinator:	John Corbett	JSCsails@aol.com	245-4858
GRASA Website:	www.eteamz.com/GRASA		
GRASA Email:	grasa@attbi.com		