

## Silent Saturday

(paraphrased from Arlington (VA) Soccer Association)

“Silent Saturday is one way for the league to encourage parents to let our kids play the game their way rather than the way we want them to play. It's an opportunity for coaches to notice how players learn from each other during the course of a game and appreciate all the subtle ways the game teaches. We expect coaches and parents to let our kids explore their potential by making their own choices on the field instead of being told what to do throughout a game. We want our players to be free to set their own level of competition rather than play to our expectations.

This is the essence of a child-centered sports philosophy. The best players in the world affirm that their early "street soccer" experiences were the foundation for becoming highly skilled and inventive players with a real love for the game. While our objective is not to create world class players, there are enormous benefits to giving children the opportunity to enjoy exploring the game's possibilities without the distraction of being micro-managed from the sidelines.

The American youth soccer system has recently recognized that over-coaching our young players stifles their creativity and development, which the international soccer community has been telling us for years. Silent Saturday is an opportunity for parents and coaches to learn that youth prefer to be stimulated, rather than instructed. A player's opponent provides all the stimulation they need to develop good soccer instincts, which is further enhanced if the game is structured to be age-appropriate. In such a game players have many opportunities to make decisions, move the ball, explore their primary roles, and adjust their play.

Coaches and parents will always see more than their players do, so it requires patience and self-discipline not to say what you think they should be doing. Let the players play the game their way. They are all doing their best, given their age and experience, and don't need to be urged to play harder or smarter than they already are. Build an appreciation for the patterns you see in their development. Once you do, you will discover many subtle moments to applaud.”

Troy Soccer Club's Encouraged and Recommended Guidelines for Silent Saturday:

1. Parents and spectators are asked to provide support for the team by clapping only.
2. Parents and spectators are asked not to direct ANY comments regarding the game to the players, coaches, or referees.
3. Coaches are asked to provide instruction individually to players on the bench and at halftime only. Let your players make their own decisions on the field.
4. U6 and U8 Coaches (due to on-the-field coaching) are asked to instruct only for players to get in proper position off the ball, but should allow any player in possession to make their own decisions.
5. Players are encouraged to speak to each other on the field as normal, but those on the bench are asked to remain quiet.

The ultimate goal for the Troy Soccer Club is not to stifle the coach or parent, but to show all parties involved that our children can play and learn about the game on their own. They don't always need the pressures or expectations applied or forced upon by their coach and/or parent. After all, this is a kid's game and sometimes we just need to allow them to be a kid.

## Troy Soccer Club

**“ALL about the kids, ALL of the time, with ALL of our passion”**