

Mandatory Coaching License!

Should certification be required of ALL youth soccer coaches?

Sam Snow, Technical Director – US Youth Soccer



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Good coaching is key to creating early positive experiences for children in sport and physical activity. It can completely change the trajectory of kids' lives: it can get kids active for life, or wreck their enthusiasm for sport altogether. Good coaching also requires training. In one study, only 5% of kids who played for trained coaches quit the sport the next year; under non-trained coaches the attrition rate was 26%. Yet according to data from the Sports and Fitness Industry Association, less than 1 in 5 youth sports coaches (most of them volunteers) are trained in motivational techniques, and less than 1 in 3 have been trained in skills or tactics in the main sport they coach. 



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Why?

- Who's coaching our kids?

Why not?

- Nothing can be 'required' of a volunteer.



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Community-based programs ...host approximately 4.1 million coaches and more than 50 million young athletes. These community-based programs rely heavily on uneducated volunteer coaches with good intentions. Wiersma and Sherman (2005) define uneducated as “...lacking formal training or education in developmentally appropriate coaching practices.” When training occurs, ...athletic skill development has been stressed. An untrained coach is frequently unprepared to deal with parents, management issues, practice design, athlete behavioral issues, and the pressure to win. Many of these coaches do not understand that developmentally-inappropriate practices can negatively impact athletes’ experiences. 



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Poor coaching, one of the top reasons youth sport participants drop-out of sport, can be linked to the 2.5 million volunteer coaches who lack formal education and experience in coaching young athletes. Retention of sport coaches is an issue ...coaches average three years of coaching before moving on... 

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Athletic coaches have the potential to be among the most influential people in a young person's life and athletes often idolize their coaches. The impact a coach has on an athlete endures psychologically, physically, and emotionally. Retaining dedicated and committed coaches is critical to the longevity of lifelong sport and recreation participation. 📖



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Is 'mandatory' a dirty word?

So how about 'compulsory' or 'required' or 'obligatory' or 'binding' or 'essential' or 'statutory'?

- *"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."*

— [Romeo and Juliet \(II, ii, 1-2\)](#)

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Parents should expect the soccer coach to have a formal coaching qualification just as they do of a teacher or teacher's aide at school. Whether a youth coach is full-time, part-time or volunteer there should be a national minimum certification required. That minimum could be a Youth Module certificate, an "F" License or a Beginner Level 1 course.



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Support for the Plan

“I like the idea of some common standards. I like the idea of some assurance everyone has a similar base of knowledge. For sure we expect that of our referees. I support the idea of leagues requiring coaches to meet expectations to work within the program. These expectations can include formal coaching education awards. More importantly requiring all coaches to complete background checks, concussion recognition training and a orientation to the philosophy and goals of the program are most critical.”



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“A coaching award tells us a coach has been exposed to a certain level of content. Training in athlete well being and the expectation of ‘citizenship’ in the competitive environment tells us, in addition, a lot more.”

Ian Barker, Director of Coaching Education - National Soccer Coaches Association of America



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In the U.S.A. one needs a license to cut hair, but not to teach a child how to play a sport. The reasonable expectations of parents that a youth soccer coach have some minimum coaching certification should be higher. Whether a coach is a volunteer or paid, he or she should have a coaching certificate or license from a state soccer association.

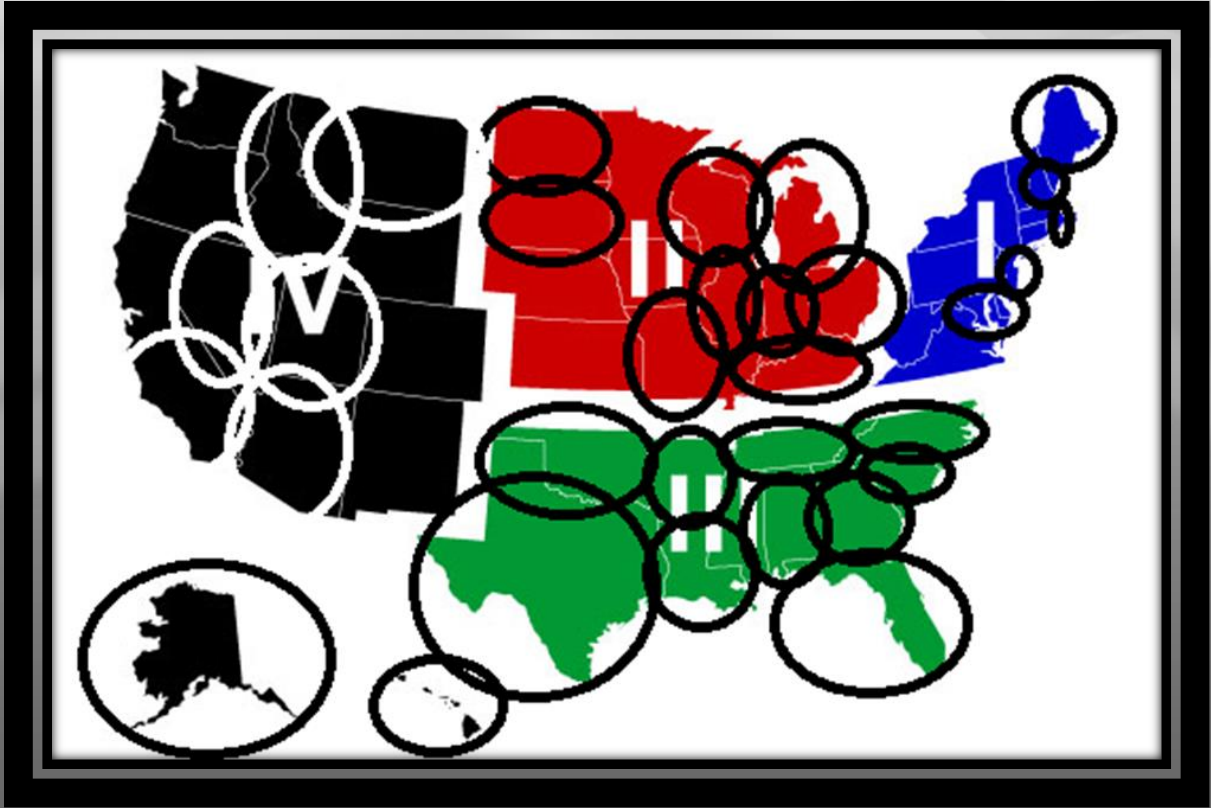


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Who Already Has Requirements?

The following state associations have some form of compulsory coaching certification:

AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA-S, DE, FL, GA, HI,
ID, IL, IN, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MS,
MO, MT, NV, NH, NJ, NC, ND, OH-N,
OH-S, OK, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX-N, TX-S,
UT and WI.



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Figures on the number of registered coaches in the states with some type of required license are not fully available. Anecdotally though it can be assumed that if there was a large drop off within the coaching ranks the state associations that have required coaching in place would have reversed the requirement. Since that's not been the case it can be assumed they are holding steady or even increasing the number of licensed coaches in the state.



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By having a requisite for coaching certification clubs will find that the retention of coaches will improve. When a coach feels better equipped to coach, that he or she has a better understanding of soccer and the players, then that coach is more confident and positive. There's a positive and lasting ripple effect from essential coaching licensure. The leaders of a soccer club have an obligation to the players to push the coaches in the club to continually improve their craft. The parents of the players in the club should expect and demand this effort from the club. If we raise through education the abilities of the average coach then we directly raise the caliber of play in the USA.



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“AYSO introduced mandatory age-appropriate certification in 2010. It was a significant challenge both in execution and acceptance, but it reflected our genuine commitment to Player Development for all players. The game of soccer is simple, but understanding how to teach children at each age level and teaching what is appropriate for their age and development is critical.”



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“The mandated certification ensures that our parent coaches understand the environment that needs to be created for a great experience for the child. In the past 3 years we have rewritten our U-4, U-5, U-6, U-8, U-10, U-12 and U-14 coaching curriculum into a very interactive format.

We'll launch our Intermediate (U-14) curriculum in 2015.

We provide parent coaches with current and innovative methodology for them to succeed on the field. The unexpected, but exciting result is that requiring age-appropriate coach training and certification has stimulated our entire organization!”



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“Parents that volunteer to coach should expect proper training and education from the club. Parents should receive age appropriate training, practice sessions and mentoring from knowledgeable coaches to be successful. We have to focus more on the continuing education of our volunteer parent coaches and not just the license they earn.”

Scott D. Gimple, Deputy National Executive Director

- American Youth Soccer Organization



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Courses delivered by the State Associations for US Youth Soccer

TOPSoccer Coaching Course

U10/U12 Youth Module

U6/U8 Youth Module



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Courses delivered by the State Associations for U.S. Soccer

“D” License

“E” License

“F” License



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Courses hosted by the State Associations with U.S. Soccer/US Youth Soccer



“C” License



“Y” License

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“We believe that a coaching certificate doesn’t mean an individual is a top coach. Rather, it means there is a basic minimum standard that the candidate has successfully navigated which can help put the candidate on a course to become a top coach. We see coaching as a journey rather than a destination in the same way it is for a player. Those coaches who are always questioning and seeking out new ideas will often be the most successful.”



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“One of our strategic goals to eventually become one of the best Leagues in the world by 2022 is to be a world leader in the quality and skill of its technical staff. This is something we take very seriously and the compulsory coaching licenses fall in line with that strategic goal.”

Jeff Agoos, Vice President, Competition
– Major League Soccer



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A better final
product!



Better ingredients
lead to...

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“The SAY coaching philosophy is to strongly encourage a mandatory coaching clinic, for all coaches working with U-6 players or a recreational coach working with older players, as coaching young soccer players require a unique set of skills. From novice coach to veteran leader, attending a coaching clinic will help you acquire and further your skills in the ever changing game of soccer.”



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“New research shows a direct correlation between the furthering of education by the coach and the advancement of the player. Not only will attending coaching clinics, seminars and/or webinars improve you as both a coach and person, it positively effects the most important person of any program, ‘the player’. Ultimately this results in more fun, enjoyment and knowledge which creates a better player and provides a foundation to becoming a better person.”

Neil Bradford, National Director of Coaching

– SAY Soccer



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Players Bill of Rights

- ® Right to have qualified coaches.
- ® Right to proper preparation for participation in soccer.

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The best soccer coaches in the world are lifelong students of the game. They are always reading, watching the game, participating in the Olympic Development Program, attending a symposium or Workshop and taking the next coaching course. A wise coach knows where to find quality resources. The coaches section of the US Youth Soccer website is the place to start for videos, on-line clinics, articles, session plans and more. As the saying goes, the best never rest!



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"There is not one parent that would drop their child off at a local community pool if there was not a certified lifeguard on duty. That same standard of care should be observed on the playing field."

Dr. Lawrence Lemak

MLS Chief Medical Officer

The National Center for Sports Safety



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“We at US Club Soccer believe that formal and informal education is critical to development as a coach – and that coaching development is the most important piece to promote development of better players. “Professional” coaches truly understand that their own continuing education is a requirement of the job, and a commitment they make to the players they work with. In reality, coaching is teaching in an athletic environment – and expecting educators to have minimum standards of knowledge and certification is not unreasonable.”

Bill Sage, Executive Director

– US Club Soccer



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- ❖ Coach education for all coaches!
- ✓ Iceland has only 325,000 people, only 20,000 football players and yet ranks 28th on the FIFA ranking list.
- ✓ If Iceland was a US city it would rank 58th in population among US cities with considerably fewer inhabitants than Honolulu, Hawaii!

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❖ Coach education for all coaches!

- If you want to be a football coach in Iceland, you must have coach education, even if you want to coach beginners at the grassroots level. Around 70% of all coaches have completed the UEFA B license (124 hrs.) and around 30% have completed the UEFA A license (220 hrs.). This is counting all coaches. On top of that many of the coaches are educated physical education teachers or have completed a Bachelors Degree in exercise and sport science. All the clubs in the top 2 leagues undergo a club licensing system where coach education for all coaches is mandatory and the clubs get fined by the Icelandic Football Association if they do not fulfill the coach education requirements. This has created a whole country of educated coaches who receive the basic tools they need to coach straight from the FA of Iceland.



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National Soccer Organizations that champion compelled certification for coaches.

United States Olympic Committee

U. S. Soccer

US Youth Soccer

NSCAA

AYSO

SAY

MLS

US Club Soccer



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Coaches are teachers, and teachers are coaches – both groups are in the business of maximizing the potential of their students. A coach's classroom is in a gym or on a field, while the teacher has a classroom in a building, but both have tools and resources at their disposal to make a difference in the development of others. The expectation of our coaches to have an understanding of coaching youth matched with a strong background in the technical, tactical, physical and psycho-social concepts of the sport is more than reasonable in this era of sport. Our children all have potential to be great on and off the field of play, and a coach with proper education and knowledge is a requirement we should not overlook. The overwhelming majority of National Governing Bodies are moving in this direction; to require coaching education in order to coach in sanctioned events and leagues. It is only a matter of time until this is the social norm for sport in America, for the protection of our young athletes and their right to play, learn and grow through sport.

Chris Snyder | Director of Coaching Education
United States Olympic Committee
1 Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80909



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- When you go to your next Workshop or Convention session consider this quote from Joachim Löw head coach of world champions Germany, this is what he said after winning the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil:

"Youth coaches create World Champions"

If you are a technical director, in charge of a club, a CEO or a head youth coach think about how good your youth coaches are and if they have the right tools to teach the players the skills they need to become successful players.



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A required, formal coach-licensing program provides a broad spectrum of benefits to a soccer organization. A close examination of the US Soccer licensing content and the related competencies reveals that the license benchmarks extend well beyond the sport-specific technical aspects.

The universal value is the ability for an organization to establish common, organization-wide benchmarks for many aspects of the coaching domain. From a parent organization perspective at any level, the following are 4 primary benefits;



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1 CONTINUOUS PROGRESS (Coaches and players grow together)

A properly sequenced license path enables a sport organization to establish common coaching standards across multiple development stages and multiple levels of play.



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2 PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS (reduce reliance on public perception as a measurement tool)

The license program will qualify coaches based on measurable, competency-based benchmarks. This may provide an organization with a 3rd party measure of coaching standards.



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3 RELIABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY (reduce liability)

The license program will establish consistent performance standards and best practices beyond sport-specific technical information. (including athlete safety, age-appropriate best practices and acceptable coaching behaviors)



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4 REWARD AND RECOGNITION (increase positivity)

The licensing program is an effective tool to reward and recognize commitment and standards in the coaching domain.



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“F” License

Cost to take the course is \$25.00, which includes 1 year access to the Digital Coaching Center.

Beginning May 1 the “F” License will be a prerequisite to the “E” License course.



References



Determinants of Coaches' Commitment

Dr. Sheri Huckleberry, Professor – Ohio University



Youth Sports Coaching Initiative – Partnership for a Healthier America, in collaboration with United States Olympic Committee, Nike and Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA