



24 Hour Rule

The 24 hour rule is a standard our club has put into play to prevent discussions regarding playing time, positions, tactics, or general decision making immediately following a game. It's essentially a **cool off period** that removes emotion from the conversation which allows both parties to collect their thoughts prior to speaking about the events. The worst thing a parent can do is storm across a field after a game or seek out the coach in the parking lot to discuss sensitive topics, typically right in front of their child. It is just as bad for coaches to deflect these types of conversations entirely, because they can be very constructive and help parents understand your point of view. After all, the parents truly care about the development of their child within the team, and if they are not getting playing time and paying for your expertise, coaches need to explain why.

Parents: If you are concerned about the playing time in games of your child, please consider the following before contacting your coach.

1. Game time is not nearly as important as practice time. That may sound completely crazy, because in games you see the results of training and play is typically at a higher rate, but it is true. Well planned out training sessions develop players faster, and challenge players consistently. As players age, U16 and above training sessions should be at a minimum of a 3:1 ratio to games (although it rarely happens). Preparation and learning is so important and that is developed in training.
2. Playing time fluctuates game to game for a variety of reasons. Injury, nutrition, conditioning, roster size, tactics, opponent skill level, missed training sessions, and game day form (just didn't have it) are just a few examples that affect playing time. Coaches balance so many of these factors on weekends and it is not always difficult to manage playing time from game to game.
3. Where does my kid fit in with team? This is a hard question to ask yourself, and as parents, it is generally a little more positive than the coach believes. A good exercise for this is to think of the team in tiers (there should be 3 or 4 within a group) and which tier does my child fit into? Also think of his/her role: are they a central player or outside player? Who are the players on the team that also play that position?

After thinking about that for a 24 hour period, email your coach and just let them know you would like to speak about your child and specifically what it is regarding. This is much preferred method over the random phone call (that a good coach sees coming) so that the coach can collect his/her thoughts and provide an in depth conversation.

Coaches: Be open to these conversations and communicate with your parents as needed. Yes, we all have that one parent that calls every week, but good communication and perspective, as well as addressing the team as a whole can limit some of the extra phone calls coaches receive. I write a team newsletter every week to give the parents some insight into my coaching

methods and how I believe the team performed in training and games. Although, when a parent needs to call following a game be prepared and do the following.

1. Take down notes about the last game and the player's training that week. This will help you during the conversation and point out important things the player needs to improve on going forward. What position they played, how they performed, and some key moments during the game will show the parent you are diligent.
2. Be specific and give insight into the player's strengths and weaknesses. Give details only a coach (or soccer savvy parent) would know from different aspects of the game. Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Psychological strengths and weaknesses should all be touched on. Provide insight into the player from a soccer perspective, and relate it to the child's personality. For example, if a goalkeeper is introverted by nature, they are going to have trouble communicating and directing the back line. I have found this to be helpful with parents who always identify with their child's personality, but don't understand how it affects their play on the field. **You are essentially showing the parent you know their child, and that is always a plus for a coach.**
3. Communicate – that with improvement, will come opportunity. If a player needs to catch up to their peers, be honest and let the parent know that. If they need to do work outside your training sessions, tell them. Your club should provide additional training sessions for players that need this help, and direct these parents to those opportunities.

All this should be done in about 10 minutes – 24 hours after the last training session or game. It is simply a more healthy conversation if you can do it this way and keep the talk short. It will avoid the emotions that typically follow high level soccer games, and parents sometimes parents feel the stress more than the players. I recommend all clubs put this rule into play and coaches keep an open method of contact with their parents. Communication is often the key to success and the more open you are as a coach, typically the less phone calls you receive.

If the 24 Hour rule is broken, the following escalation protocol will be followed:

- 1st offence - player misses a practice
- 2nd offence -player misses a weeks practise and a game
- 3rd offence - player is released

This rule is adapted from the NJ Travel Soccer Blog. The original article can be found [HERE](#)