



Soccer — Just For Kicks



Soccer Gives Area Kids 'Hands-Off' Experience

By CARL WESTBERG

Early in life, a child is propped up and prompted by a parent to sit up. Once the child has mastered the ability to balance on a Pampier, there comes the necessity to learn something new.

From the young child's perspective, these early ventures into the wonderful world of sports can be somewhat confusing.

Mom or Dad takes this round object and rolls it toward the unsuspecting, swaying young'un with the encouragement to "catch the ball." The poor child is lost!

First of all, what is a ball? And second, what does catch mean, anyway? After all, "sit up" was just learned a short time ago.

A round object comes rolling across the floor and surely the child must think he or she is being attacked. One of two things happens: Either the child is knocked off its Pampier like a bowling pin, or the youngster realizes catch means stop. So, while reaching for the ball, the child quickly learns the meaning of fall.

If the child is lucky enough to stop the ball, there is the grasping and lifting of it. From that moment on for

the rest of the tot's life, everytime there's a round object it MUST end up in the hands. It doesn't matter if it is a rattle ball, rubber ball, baseball, hardball, basketball, or the one that's gone bad and gotten out of shape (a football), the hands capture it.

Then suddenly someone shouts, "let's play soccer" and the learning begins anew. A new word and a new game. The ball looks the same — it's still round — but it has these funny black and white sections. That, however, is the least of the confusion.

The major problem is a voice says, "don't you dare touch that ball with your hands!"

Then what do I do with the darn thing? Well, you can bump it with your head (ouch), stop it with your chest, (another ouch), your thigh, your knee, your leg below the knee, or your foot. As a matter of fact, in soccer the hands have been replaced with the feet.

That's right, this new game is played mostly with the feet. The child must be wondering, "What have my parents done to me?"

Soccer is not really difficult to learn or play once the child gets over the shock of replacing the hands with the

feet, and the ouches.

For the past couple of years a group of people in and around the Walnut, Marshall, Mars Hill and Flat Creek areas have been helping 6- to 13-year-old children overcome the shock and ouches.

These people have been a part of the soccer program of the Asheville area, specifically the North Buncombe region.

It is a two-part program including a spring and fall season. During the fall season last year, boys and girls played on four teams grouped by ages — 6 and 7, 8 and 9, 10 and 11, and, 12 and 13.

This spring, registration from the Mars Hill, Flat Creek, Marshall, and Walnut areas was insufficient to field a single team in either of the age groups.

"We were disappointed with the small number of children who registered," said Jim Woodruff, an active member of the soccer program. "As a result, we could not participate in the North Buncombe program."

"We had a couple of meetings to discuss what we should do for the children who were interested in learning to play the sport. Our decision was to have an instructional program for the spring," Woodruff said.

This program included a once-a-week instructional session to teach the children dribbling, trapping, heading and shooting. Time was also spent understanding the field of play, the rules, positions and formations.

"I am quite pleased with the improvement of some of the players and how quickly the beginners learned some of the basics," said Woodruff. "We did manage to have some Satur-



Gabrielle Graeter dribbles as she weaves through the cones during a recent soccer practice session at Walnut School. Control of the ball, speed and use of both feet are techniques for improving soccer skills.

day games among ourselves."

There are several people in the program now — such as Kathy Graeter and Ed Krause — who are interested in building what has been called the Madison County Youth Soccer Association. The association hopes to expand the program throughout the county and play teams from other soccer programs.

"We are looking forward to the fall program," Woodruff said. "We hope

to pick up several more people interested in helping us make the association as good as any around.

"The beauty of the sport is that children of every size can play. I see no reason why our program could not expand to more than 200 children over the next few years," he said.

"Hopefully, we will develop a league that children can participate in and then go on to other soccer teams that will become a part of our

school's programs," Woodruff said. "All that is needed is for mom and dad to teach the youngsters to kick the ball in addition to catching it."

The Madison County Youth Soccer Association will hold a registration period in the early fall. Persons interested in assisting with the association can call Jim Woodruff at 649-2223. Also, watch The News Record for additional information and announcements.

Program In 2nd Year

Madison County Youth Soccer has existed now for two years. The children play during the spring and fall and have just completed their fourth season.

Soccer is a sport which appeals to both girls and boys and children of all ages. Usually, several teams are formed according to age: 6- to 7-year-olds, 8- to 9-year-olds, 10- to 11-year-

olds, and 12- to 13-year-olds.

Practice is held one or two times a week after school, and games are played Saturday mornings. Practice was held this spring on the field at Walnut School.

Soccer is a good, fun sport and the children thoroughly enjoy the game, according to soccer coaches.

Watch for details this summer.



Young Madison County soccer players recently received trophies for their efforts and enthusiasm. They are, from right to left, front row — Olivia Shealy, Anna Woodruff, Amy Davis, Jody Davis, Jesse Graeter, Heather West, Seth Treadway and Jeremiah West-

berg. Back row — Gabrielle Graeter, Logan Woodruff, Keith Rice, Pamela Boyd, Jason Stone, Callan Welder, Justin Skemp, Joshua Adams, Matthew Adams, Jennifer Woodruff and Paula Boyd.



Budding soccer players go through practice drills at Walnut School field. Anna Woodruff works on accuracy in passing to a teammate,

while Amy Davis, Jeremiah Westberg and Heather West await their turns.

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