



FAQ #2

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #2:

HOW MUCH PLAYING TIME SHOULD A COMPETITIVE PLAYER EXPECT?

"Coach....let me go in, I'm ready to play!"

SYSC provides programs for all soccer levels; young or mature, novice or experienced, and talented or not-so-talented. Regardless of the level or the sport, ALL ATHLETES train and practice in order to prepare for the experience and the exhilaration of competition. Competition with an opposing team or athlete is an exciting TEST of your ability and it is the REWARD for making a commitment to preparation and training. The excitement of the "match" environment is nearly impossible to replicate in a training environment. The "match" thus becomes a critical developmental tool and an essential motivator for the athlete and the coach.

Q1: HOW OFTEN and HOW MUCH SHOULD WE COMPETE?

Each sport has a unique set of physical demands that are based upon the rules of the game, the physical dimensions of the playing area and the number of opponents. At all levels, soccer is a High Intensity Aerobic sport. It is also one of a handful of "physical contact" sports. The running volume, physical intensity and physical contact of "Futbol" necessitate the following guidelines if your goal is to perform at a maximum level in each match:

- 1 full match per week (no more than 2 matches in a 72 hour period)
- Multiple matches in a week or weekend mean that substitutions should be made liberally.
- Maximum of 20 matches per year (U10-U11)
- Maximum of 30 matches per year (U12 thru college)
- 2-3 Practices per match for proper preparation.

Q2: HOW MUCH PLAYING TIME SHOULD AN INDIVIDUAL EXPECT IN A TEAM SPORT SUCH AS SOCCER?

The General answer is that from FIFA through to the Youth League level, roster size and game duration are designed to create a team environment in which all members must compete for playing time. Team members must also "share" playing time in order to provide rest for teammates and to provide different player "personalities" to the flow of the match through the use of substitutions.

- Professional Athletes & College Soccer Athletes generally substitute only for tactical or performance reasons. In most matches only 2-3 subs enter the game.

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- ALL youth league players (U5-U12) should expect to play a minimum of 50% of each game. Playing time is critical to their development and to nurture their self-confidence.
- (U10-12) ALL White, Red (select), Black (premier) players should expect to play a portion of every match. Additionally, the individual's cumulative playing time over the season should meet or exceed 50% of the total minutes available.
- (U13-19) ALL White, Red (select), Black (premier) players should expect to play a minimum of 50% of the total time over the course of the playing season.
- The 3 EXCEPTIONS to this 50% standard are:
 1. When a team is entered into a Championship knockout competition substitutions are generally not made to accommodate the 50% rule.
 2. When an athlete has failed to make a full commitment level to training and team events. The playing time should be decreased proportionally.
 3. When an individual athlete is being penalized for violation of team rules or code of conduct these guidelines do not apply.

The developmental concepts related to playing time...

- Development of tactical concepts for older youth players (U13-19) requires players to stay in the match for longer periods ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ match). Mathematically, this may mean that some players do not receive 50% of the time in each individual match.
- The physical maturity of a teen athlete necessitates that their physical endurance and mental concentration be challenged for longer periods during a match.
- It is the responsibility of the team coach to achieve 50% of playing time over the course of the season. (e.g. Match 1=20 min, Match 2=30 min, Match 3= full match, Match 4= 30 min.)