

Welcome to the Pittsfield Soccer Club Kickers Program. The following information will fill you on what you'll need to know about our program.

Practices:

Our program is scheduled to kick off with the **first practice session on Wednesday, September**

1. Practice sessions will be held as follows each Wednesday evening through October 27:

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
K-1	5:00 – 5:45 pm	TBD
2-5	5:45 – 6:30 pm	TBD

We will announce our program location as soon as our club is assigned a field by the city.

As you may notice, we have shortened the practice session times this season. Call it a pre-emptive strike against the loss of daylight that always occurs during the fall season. We have shortened timeframes for the Wednesday sessions, but added an extra week overall to the program to make up some of the lost time.

We will have a check-in station set up on the first two Wednesday night sessions; so please stop by to get your child's team assignment, jersey and game schedule. If you did not include payment with your original registration, please be prepared to pay in full at check in.

All practice sessions will be organized and run by the professional trainers from Soccer Domain Academy (formerly Ashley's Soccer Camp), and assisted by the team coaches.

*******New This Fall*******

Labor Day Kick-Off Classic Tournament:

New to our program this season, the Kickers will be participating in the Pittsfield Soccer Club's annual Labor Day Kick-Off Classic soccer tournament. The Kick-Off Classic is a major fund raiser for the club; and features play by competitive travel teams spanning three age divisions from Berkshire County and beyond.

Proceeds from this tournament provide soccer scholarships for our Kinderkicker, Kickers and Travel Programs, support all of the Pittsfield high schools' soccer programs, and contribute to the club's long-term goal of developing a permanent home field location.

The Kicker players, who represent the future of the PSC and high school programs will be featured in a special training session during the tournament. All age groups will be participating from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The tournament is held at Berkshire Community College.

Games:

All games will be played on Saturday mornings as follows beginning on ***Saturday, September 11:***

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
K-1	9:00 – 10:00 am	TBD
2-5	10:00 – 11:00 am	TBD

Saturday sessions consist of a 20 -30 minute warm-up/practice first, followed by a game for the balance of the hour. The trainers will be present to run the warm-up/practice session. Coaches from each team will then run the games that follow while the trainers “float” between games to observe and teach.

There will be no session on Saturday, October 9, due to the Columbus Day weekend. Otherwise, games will be played every Saturday through October 30.

As for the game format, the most obvious thing you will notice is that the fields and goals are smaller than you might typically picture when thinking of soccer. As advertised, our program provides games in a small-sided format. Translated, that means games are generally played in a 3 vs. 3, or 4 vs. 4, format.

We can not emphasize enough that Kickers is a non-competitive, educational program geared toward teaching young soccer players the basics of ball control (dribbling, turning, passing, first touches, etc). The Kickers game environment is not intended to teach your child positional play, set plays, game strategy and/or every rule of the game. The Pittsfield Soccer Club sponsors competitive boys' and girls' travel programs which introduce and develop these additional facets of the game, but at a more developmentally-appropriate age and under more formal game settings. Instead, Kicker practice sessions focus on ball skills; and the primary goal of our games is to promote their use. During a game your child may also be exposed to throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks; but beyond these basic soccer elements, game “teaching” will be limited to ball skills.

Often, depending on the flow of a particular game, and at the sole discretion of the trainers, playing rules may be changed to award “goals” or “points” to a team for performance of specific ball skills, completion of passes, or any other aspect taught during the practice sessions. In this way, games will be kept more balanced, every child (from timid to gung-hoe) will be given a way to “score” for the team, and stronger players will be encouraged to work on ball skills rather than simply out-kick and out-run everyone else to score a goal.

In lieu of a formal pre-set game schedule for the season, game match-ups will be determined each week by the SDA trainers.

Teams

The number and size of teams is determined by the number of participants in your child's respective age group. Our intent is to keep all of the teams balanced by mixing equal numbers of boys and girls on each team, as well as by distributing the children equally by age group. For example, in the grade 2-5 group, we won't put a team of six or seven 5th graders together who will play a team of six or seven 2nd graders.

We receive numerous requests from parents that their child be placed on a team with a specific friend, a specific coach, kids from the same school, other kids with eleven toes, etc, etc. We will do what we reasonably can to honor all such requests; but will not guarantee that we will always be able to do so.

Uniforms and Equipment

To participate safely in the practices and games, your child should wear appropriate gear. ***Shin guards are required, and no child will be permitted to play without them.*** The risk of an extremely painful kick to the shin is very real with this sport; so shin guards are a priority. Soccer cleats are also strongly recommended, but your child may wear sneakers if he/she prefers. Mouth guards are recommended too, but not required. The children are encouraged to wear their team jersey to practice each Wednesday, but are not required to do so. Jerseys should definitely be

worn to the Saturday game sessions. Finally, your child should also bring a water bottle (or other appropriate drink) to each practice and game as well.

Coaches:

Each team will be assigned a volunteer coach. All of our coaches offer their time and service to help us make this program work; and for that we are very grateful. Please show them the utmost appreciation and respect throughout the season. Some of our volunteers may have significant coaching experience. Some may not. Some may have significant knowledge and experience with soccer. Others may not. Basically, though, a Kickers team simply needs the coach to help the trainers keep the kids focused and actively involved in the practice drills, make player substitutions during games, and assist with parent communications.

Cancellations:

On occasion, inclement weather may force us to cancel games or practices. If so, you should expect an e-mail from us as the program coordinators as well as a phone call or e-mail from a team parent volunteer. Since the trainers are unavailable at times other than what we have scheduled, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to reschedule cancelled practices and/or games.

Note about lightening: For the safety of the children, trainers and spectators, we have no choice but to clear the field as soon as we see lightening, regardless of how far away a storm appears to be. Under our club's policy, we can not resume play on the field until 30 minutes after the last flash of lightening is seen. In most cases, lightening will probably mean cancellation of the remaining time in the day's session.

Other Important Notes:

* The registration fee for Kickers includes training, games and a t-shirt, but unfortunately, no janitorial service. Please make sure that, in addition to your child, his or her empty water bottles, juice boxes, jackets, etc. are taken with you when you leave each session.

* There are no public restrooms available at the field. Little statement. Big implications. Please try to remember that little tidbit before leaving home for the soccer field. Like last season, our club will work on obtaining port-a-potties to have at the fields, but we can't guarantee with certainty that they will be available. Keep your fingers crossed.

* Finally, e-mail is our primary method for communication, especially for schedule changes, weather cancellations, etc; so please be sure to check your inbox regularly.

I think that is about all we have to share for now. That's enough right? We believe that Kickers is a great youth soccer program; and we are very excited that you and your child will be a part of it. We look forward to seeing you on September 1. If, in the meantime, you have any unanswered questions about the program, please send us a note or give us a call.

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