

Soccer has a long tradition of old-fashioned sportsmanship. Some of the traditions seem to be holdovers from the age of chivalry, not always a bad thing. A unique example is a tradition of kicking the ball out if there is an injured player down. Tradition dictates that although the ball is returned by throw-in from the opponent, the opponent throws it back to the team that was in possession at the time it was kicked out. All in the spirit of "Fair Play".

English soccer has a tournament called the FA Cup in which all soccer teams compete for the cup, not just the Premier Division. Last week, in Football Association Cup play in England, a fourth division team, "Chesterfield" was tied with un-ranked Droylesden, 1-1. A Droylesden player sent the ball out when his teammate was injured in the 79th minute. Chesterfield threw the ball back in but not, as is custom, to a Droylesden player but to one of their own who promptly scored on an unsuspecting goalkeeper. Chaos ensued, holding the game up for five minutes.

The Chesterfield coach finally was able to diffuse the situation by ordering his players to allow Droylesden to walk the ball into the net at the resumption of play. The game ended in a 2-2 draw and will be re-played as the two teams are tied on points. That process of tradition, fair play, and resolution of conflict is one American sports should find a way to emulate.

Local soccer has moved indoors for the tournament season. The second tournament, hosted by Spearfish is this weekend. The Winter Classic held by Rushmore Soccer Club, is scheduled for January 23-25 but the entry deadline is tomorrow, January 9. Games begin Friday evening at the Civic Center and both South and West gyms. These competitions are fast-paced and fun to watch at all ages. If you are thinking about interesting your child in soccer, this is a great way to introduce the indoor game and see kids having a great time.

One concern often mentioned by players, referees, and administrators is "overcoaching", a situation when the coach is always shouting directions to players. Parents often are guilty of this element of confusion as players try to hear parental advice and coaching advice simultaneously.

One coach explained his interpretation of his role as both the parent and the coach by comparing the game to a music recital. "I tell my parents and players to use musical performances as an example. A music teacher works very hard at lessons, but sits back and enjoys the performance" advised Patrick Demasco. That sounds like pretty good advice when you think about what it would be like to go to a recital or performance only to have the production contorted by screaming parents or teachers. We could make the games much easier for our kids if we learned to see their "performance" the way we would see their music recital. Worth a try.