

The weather is playing true to form...spring in South Dakota. Soccer games begin outdoors next week and games will only be cancelled if there is too much snow (sigh) or lightning. Folk wisdom dictates that if these two come together, heavy snow is the result. You should get in the habit of checking the webpage at www.rcysl.com if the weather is questionable. Referees can cancel a game if they are concerned about safety. Most games will be played.

The message here is: "Plan for cold, wet weather". Better to have the bag of warm clothes in the car and not need them than to wish you had tossed it in. Fill it with a blanket, a couple of large garbage bags or rain gear, extra gloves and hats, dry socks for the soccer players and a warm sweatshirt or turtleneck that can go under a jersey, an energy bar, and a water bottle. A little planning today will mean you can be on those sidelines supporting your child regardless of the whims of nature.

Central and Stevens High school players and parents should mark their calendars for the first informational meetings of the high school season. If you are interested in playing high school soccer, you need to attend the appropriate meeting. Stevens High School meets on April 14 with boys from 6:00 to 7:30 PM and girls beginning at 7:30 PM in the Freshman Lunchroom. Central will hold the informational meeting on April 22, beginning at 6:00 PM for both boys and girls programs. They will meet in the Commons. The SDHSAA has voted to sanction the sport but that move is about 2 years away. If you're interested in high school soccer, these are the places and times you need.

The US Under 23 Men's team has qualified for the Beijing Olympics although they were second in the CONCACAF tournament, losing in overtime to Honduras 1-0. The US Women begin qualifying play next week in Mexico. The USA opens against Jamaica on Friday, April 4 and meets Mexico on April 6 in Group A play. Canada, Costa Rica and Trinidad/Tobago make up Group B. The top two teams from each group will cross over to play in the semi-finals and the winners of those games will advance to the Olympics.

Major League Soccer begins play on Saturday. Houston Dynamo meets New England on Fox Soccer at 5:30 PM to set the season off. The league's big star, David Beckham, spent some time last weekend on "60

Minutes” explaining his optimism about US soccer. Beckham has a youth soccer developmental academy in California to match the one in England and he sees the US as a significant growth market for soccer.

The very youngest players, the Under 6 group, opens on April 5. These players are just learning about kicking a ball, running after it, passing it to a teammate, and where to direct it. Actually, they are learning more about how to be part of a team and to trust that another child will help them accomplish a goal – to score a goal. That is an enormous amount of human knowledge when you consider the evolution of our species...trusting members of your group to help you. If you are on the sidelines watching your child, cheer for the passes because it means your child has decided to join the human family. Celebrate the goals if they are a result of some cooperation because that means our future is secure. Marvel in the steps your child takes toward independence as they take the field and make their own decisions. Relax and enjoy all they are embracing and keep it all positive.