

Soccer now starts April 13. All games that were on the schedule prior to that date will be rescheduled. Keep in touch with your coach for the schedule updates.

Spring soccer in the Black Hills means more gambling than Deadwood. It is always at the mercy of Mother Nature but you can be prepared. You need a "soccer support bag" for the spring season. Get your soccer players involved and assemble the emergency items you could be wishing for on the sidelines.

Large trash bags can easily become windbreakers or ponchos. An old towel and a couple of grocery bags for cleats can make quite a difference in the interior of your vehicle after some muddy games. Extra socks, a turtleneck shirt or sweatshirt to slip under a jersey, running tights, hats and gloves can keep you and your players feeling better in wind or rain. The old picnic blanket is a welcome addition if it is windy and lovely if it turns out to be a warm day. Keep an extra water bottle in the bag as well as some energy snacks that can boost calories when the game is over and bodies are chilled. It never hurts to put in some sunscreen and even some bug repellent for those evening games. Planning for the best and the worst takes most of the frustration out of spring sports.

For those new to soccer or those who are moving up from the U6 level, soccer does not cancel games unless there is lightning, the field is virtually underwater (or snow), or it is too dark to see. The game will start on time, play the allotted time and end when the referee has added extra time if needed (rarely happens in youth soccer). Don't assume that because the weather looks unpleasant that the game will be cancelled. Check the website (www.rcysl.com) and your email but if there is no notice of cancellation, be the responsible parent and show up. The team is depending on all players and your child will learn to be part of the team in good times and bad. Think of it as teaching commitment.

Parents can do a great deal to support a positive experience for children. You can adopt a positive attitude toward the coach and each game. Criticizing the coach, the referee, or the other players sends your child the message that others are responsible rather than helping your child see that he will benefit from trying his best and accepting his responsibility as part of the team. You can take the 6:30 PM parent class tonight or next Thursday at the RCYSL office to learn more.

Parents can also provide positive nutritional support for kids by cutting back on junk food in favor of fruit snacks and juices, eliminating carbonated drinks (particularly those with caffeine) but providing plenty of water or sport drinks to re-energize after playing. Encouraging your kids to make

food decisions that actually affect their energy levels and ability to maintain high performance over the duration of the game benefits them significantly.