

With the Kohl's American Cup wrapped up, the recreation level of soccer in the state is finished for this year. The new season begins August 1 and registration for that Fall Soccer season is underway. Soccer accepts registration for kids who will be 4 years old by August 1.

The competitive levels of soccer continue tournament play throughout the summer months. Rushmore Soccer Club will be sending teams to the Region II tournament in Rock Island, Illinois next week as well as hosting the Rushmore Cup tournament here in Rapid City, June 27-29. The Rushmore Cup is a fixture on the summer tournament schedule for many of the strong neighboring clubs from Montana, Colorado, and Wyoming. It is an excellent showcase for high level play in youth soccer and Rushmore Soccer runs it very well.

British Soccer Camp returns to Rapid City on July 21-25. This camp offers kids a chance to get some great exercise, play lots of soccer, interact with a team of highly talented and energetic young coaches who are experts at making skill-building exercises fun, and have some genuine laughs. Register your child today at [www.rcysl.com](http://www.rcysl.com).

In the next eight weeks you have time to think about how much soccer you want your child to play and at what level. There is a disturbing trend nationally and here in Rapid City, to keep kids focused on a single sport and to do so at younger and younger ages.

Kids should try many activities until they are at least 14. Most of our kids are going to play sports well into their adult lives if we don't burn them out when they're young. Most of our kids are not the next "Phenom" and won't need to devote 18 hours a day to a single sport from age 10. Most of us are normal parents trying to do the right thing for our kids but we can easily get caught up in the furor of organized sports sending the message "If you aren't training hard, you have no future in the sport".

The US Youth Soccer national coaching staff has voiced serious concerns about too many tournaments, too much emphasis on winning over skill development, and a system of highly selective and overly competitive programs for kids as young as 8. These trends run counter to all we have learned about child development and too often result in a child who retreats from athletics rather than embraces them. If your child heads for his room when he has a free day rather than interacting with friends, you need to re-examine the schedule.

A child who is playing too many games in a week and tournaments over a weekend has no time to be a child. Riding in the car to practice or tournaments does not count. Even a child who is passionate about a sport needs to have time for other activities to develop a more rounded outlook. Kids younger than 14 should spread their interests and explore new activities.

The Rapid City Youth Soccer League developed a “Challenge” or “Classic” level of competition that was intended to provide a high level of competition for kids who want to play more than one sport. These kids tend to be very competitive in nature and want to play on a team with like-minded peers. They also want to play softball, basketball, volleyball, run track or cross country, and many other activities. Challenge soccer has provided that level of play and has been successful in attracting the multi-sport athlete.

Challenge parents can resist the temptation to create an environment that pressures these multi-sport athletes to select soccer exclusively. The subtle pressure to construct a team that would be the “best of the teams” is already evident and may not be in the best interests of the younger players or the program. Challenge parents and players must decide just what it is that they want from this level of competitive soccer and at what age they want these things to happen.