

Hello 8th Grade Families,

My name is Coach Muirhead and I wanted to reach out to all of you in regards to your sons' participation in the high school soccer program at Columbia High School. I've had a few parents already email me regarding tryouts/vacation/etc... so I figured it was best to put together this correspondence.

Tryouts for this fall will begin on Monday August 21st. Tryouts typically last three to four days, although this does vary depending on the number of players that come out for the team. I will detail more "tryout prep" below - once tryouts are completed we immediately roll into our preseason which takes us right up to our first game on Thursday 9/7/23. If you have not already made plans for vacation (and have flexibility) we strongly encourage you to enjoy your time off before August 21st. If your son will be on vacation during the tryout period, I ask that this is communicated to us asap - he will be given an abbreviated tryout to demonstrate the same elements we evaluated all of the other players on. If you will be vacationing after tryouts and your son was selected for the freshman, Jv or Varsity team, please realize this may initially have a negative impact on his playing time. There are two main reasons why this is the case, in all likelihood, due to the length of a normal vacation (1 week) the player will have to reacclimate himself (participate in a certain number of practices) before he will be allowed to play in scrimmages and/or games. Additionally, your son will also have to play catchup on building chemistry with his teammates, as well as learning the systems that we have installed during his absence. This is by no means a deal breaker and as an incoming freshman, it is something we easily look past because as parents you may have already scheduled vacations with no idea our season begins on August 21st. There is less leniency with upperclassmen who have had the start dates since December.

Schedule wise, we begin as stated on September 7th, the last scheduled game is October 23rd. Varsity, if we are able to qualify for the state tournament, would begin play on October 27th and continue playing until we are eliminated or win it all. All week day games are typically scheduled for a 4pm start, buses take players to and from away games.

I often get a few questions about teams. We have three teams, a freshman team, a junior varsity team, and a varsity team. It is not impossible for a freshman to make the junior varsity or even the varsity team from day one, however, he must be a skilled player, physically matured for his age and most importantly, mentally and emotionally mature in order to be ready to compete at the higher levels. We've had quite a bit of success the past three years winning back to back division titles and we've been promoted to the top division meaning we will be playing the best teams in Essex County. Focusing on the freshman team, we typically look for a roster size of 18 players, we find that is a manageable number for one coach and allows us to do what we want to do. This is not a hard and steadfast number. If we have 19 very capable players, we will keep 19, if we only have 15 capable players, then 15 it is. On average we have 25-30 freshman try out each year. If you want to give your son the best opportunity to make the team then he should take ownership of the next section of this letter.

Tryouts. When evaluating players we focus on the following elements:

- The ability to dribble in tight spaces and at speed with BOTH feet
- The ability to shoot with accuracy (typically inside the 18) with BOTH feet
- The ability to shoot with power (outside the 18) with BOTH feet
- The ability to accurately play a 10-15 yard pass accurately with BOTH feet
- The ability to play a cross from the wing, with BOTH feet
- Dribbling skills
- First touch and control in general
- Movement without the ball
- Maturity
- Speed
- Endurance
- Strength
- Being a good teammate

Preparation for tryouts:

- Summer Workouts - there will be various summer training sessions held by the coaching staff as well as by the captains/seniors. These are entirely optional, however, they serve as a good opportunity to not only get to know each other but to begin playing and preparing for the fall.
- Summer Camps - The CHS coaching staff is planning two camps: **the week of Aug. 7 for rising 8th graders and rising freshmen**, and the week of Aug. 14 for rising sophomores, juniors and seniors. Details on the camps, including cost and timing will be forthcoming, and interested families are encouraged to connect with our boosters organization to receive regular communication. Again, while these camps are optional, they serve as a good opportunity to not only get to know each other but to begin playing and preparing for the fall.
- Skills Training - our newly formed booster organization is working on putting together a once a week skills training program. While this will have a cost per participant, there's plenty of youtube/instagram/tiktok videos out there that your son can emulate with a ball and a couple cones if he prefers to do that instead
- Strength Training - this is often a HUGE separator, especially early on. I can not emphasize enough how important it is to be involved in some sort of strength training regiment
- Endurance - Run. A lot. Part of the tryout process is a 2 mile run in which we recommend Varsity players target a finish time of 12 - 13 minutes. There's no penalty if you don't finish under 12-13 minutes, however, it does tend to show who has been working out over the summer and who hasn't been.
- Play. Play as much as you can, play with older kids, play with better kids.

Registration/Medical Forms

The only real registration process is completing the medical paperwork and submitting it to the high school. I recommend doing this sometime during late May, early June so that you know

it is submitted and taken care of before summer vacation begins. Here is a [direct link](#) to all the medical paperwork that you need to complete.

Additionally, parents I would ask that you complete [this short google form](#) for me so that I can begin compiling a database. We're looking to hold an information meeting for interested incoming players and parents sometime in the spring.

Finally, for your son, I suggest that he join our google classroom page, unfortunately this is just for him as it will require a SOMSD gmail account to access. The classroom code is "uvzt6gw"

Thank you,
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