

Hello SOMA Soccer 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 19th**. In years past, tryouts typically lasted three to four days, however, this year we will be following a different format. The reason behind our change is that we are essentially ending up with an extra 7-10 of preseason this year which we don't normally have due to a change in the preseason schedule/start dates. As a result, tryouts will be phased this year allowing the coaching staff to make three rounds of reductions spaced out over nine days, with the final round of reductions allowing us to evaluate that last group of players in scrimmages against other schools (state law requires six days of practice and a day of rest before you can scrimmage another school). This will be a significant change to the way we've done it in the past but being that we are anticipating carrying a smaller roster than we ever have before, we thought it was important to take advantage of these extra days and use some of them in our evaluation process. As a result, we will not be able to allow anyone to join tryouts once the process has begun on 8/19 (if they have not previously been cleared).

This will be a very competitive process this coming fall as we anticipate anywhere from 95-115 players trying out and a total program roster of approximately 55 players. The reality is that unfortunately, there may be freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors (many of whom may have been part of the program for their entire high school career) that do not make the team this fall. As a result, we are really encouraging all players to be proactive in their participation in off season activities, summer workouts and individual training. The school is anticipating that we will have a "blackout/no-contact" period from 7/27-8/4, this is a great time for family vacations, college visits etc... as there will be no official team events during this time.

Schedule wise once the season begins, the freshman team will typically practice/play 5 days a week, with some Saturdays, while JV and Varsity will almost always be 6 days a week. All week day games are typically scheduled for a 4pm start, buses take players to and from away games. For every away game, students are dismissed from school by 2:15pm, if not earlier.

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 last several years and as a result we consistently play the biggest and 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. 12th for all high school aged players (incoming 9th-12th grade)**, and the week of Aug. 5th for middle school aged players (incoming 7th and 8th graders). 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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