



May 1, 2008

Dear Coaches,

Within New Hartford and Sauquoit, we do not have goalkeepers at the U6 and U8 levels. The small pop-up goals we use serve as targets for strikers, and are not intended to be guarded by a dedicated goalkeeper. In fact, no U6 / U8 player is permitted to handle the ball as a true goalkeeper. But at this level, ball handing and shooting accuracy are in the early stages of development. Any player, even a small U6'er, can be a significant scoring obstacle by doing little more than standing still in front of the goal.

We have all seen games where coaches will place a defensive player in front of the goal, and keep this player within a short distance from the goal. We feel this is contrary to what we are trying to accomplish within U6 / U8 AYSO leagues. Not only does it detract from the fun at these levels, it instills poor defensive strategies into our young players.

At the U10 level, large goals with true goalkeepers are introduced. Defense players will quickly learn that placing their heels on a goal line and waiting for the opposing team is a losing strategy. This 'skill', picked up during U8 play, will become a liability, which will need to be unlearned.

So what are we asking from you as coaches? For now, we believe it will suffice if coaches refrain from *assigning* players the duty of standing *directly* in front of the goal for the duration of a quarter.

We understand there will be fine lines and judgment calls regarding what constitutes goal tending vs. earnest defense. Many players will naturally run back towards their goal when on defense. Additionally, the player 'swarms' that characterize play at these levels do tend settle directly in front of the goals. What we hope to avoid is the player who is planted in front of their goal, even when the ball is 25 yards away.

Within our current rules, there is no way to strictly enforce this. We are not suggesting any rule changes to prevent goaltending. We are hoping that as coaches of young, developing players you will take these concerns and the AYSO philosophies to heart, and willingly consider the spirit of our request.

As always, feel free to contact us with any questions.

Best Regards,

Ray Burynski
Frank Kopyt
Rick Purcell