

# SPORTS & LEISURE

## Youth soccer players treated to sounds of silence

By EAMONN MAHER  
Staff Writer



Parents could watch but not talk during the recent "hush" week of Georgetown Soccer Club action at the Croatian Centre. The GSC is testing the practice to help curb unruly behaviour by spectators.  
Photo by Eamonn Maher

Spectators were left mostly speechless on a recent muggy night at the Croatian Centre by a Georgetown Soccer Club directive aimed at curbing some "disappointing" behaviour on the sidelines.

Parents and other onlookers have on two occasions this season been asked to keep silent during games on designated "hush" weeks for all ages and only clap to acknowledge good play.

It's certainly nothing new as youth soccer organizations throughout the world have held hush games in response to unruly behaviour by spectators and the GSC is testing the practice at both the house league and rep levels.

"I think it's very hard because the coaches aren't yelling anything," said eight-year-old Luca Andino between gulps of water during halftime of his under-9 league game.

"Usually the parents are telling us to do this, do that, so it's kind of weird when they're quiet."

On this particular evening, several matches were taking place at the same time with hundreds of spectators in attendance, yet it was eerily quiet until a goal was scored, and even then the sound of hands clapping was fairly reserved.

"Coaches are there to coach. We want parents to encourage and we want them to be happy to support their children because this is all about the kids having fun," said Karen Channer, a rep coach and member of the GSC's Spectator Behaviour Committee.

"A lot of the comments by well-intending parents actually distract from the kids' ability to have confidence in their own abilities on the field. We quite often hear stories about overenthusiastic parents and coaches and at the end of the day for

the club, the focus really has to be for the kids to let them play. A lot of the parents thought we were babying the kids and it's not that way at all."

Still, the hush experiment had its critics. One vocally supportive woman who was asked to respect the request to keep silent refused and mentioned something about "constitutional rights."

"You can't cheer them on and I don't like that because I like to encourage my kids," said parent Kelly Kerr, who also coaches a GSC team.

"This is boring (without any cheering). The kids don't understand what's going on and in my opinion, if you have a parent who's out of line, then kick them out or give them a yellow card like the players get and if they do it again, give them a red card if you're disruptive at a game. I think that's fair."

Channer added that while the incidents on negative behaviour were isolated, the purpose of the hush games is for the spectators to think first before they make comments.

"I think it's okay, although it's a lot different when everyone's quiet," said parent Fanel Vasile.

Coaches were also asked to practise restraint, keeping their instructions to players to before, after and during halftime of the matches.

"It's good to (have a hush week) once in a while because you're asking the kids to communicate with each other when you're used to telling them to do specific things, so it's a situation where you see what happens when you don't say anything," said under-9 coach Tanya Kitchen.

"They have to find out hands-on instead of being told exactly what to do. It's a different kind of learning for the kids and it's a little bit quieter, but I think it encourages the kids to think more on their feet."



## Trio of local twirlers shine at Canadian championships

Three Georgetown residents (from left), Paige Runstedler, Olivia Denny and Michayla Del Giudice, recently returned from the Canadian Baton Twirling Championships at Conestoga College in Kitchener. Representing the Starlight Destiny Baton Club in Brampton, Denny, 10, came home with gold medals in X-strut and 2batons, bronze medal in solo event and a bronze medal in the Miss Majorette of Canada title. The 13-year-old Runstedler claimed the silver medal in the Miss Majorette of Canada and bronze medals in the X-strut event and the solo competition. Del Giudice, 15, received a bronze in X-strut, silver in the Miss Majorette of Canada and bronze in the solo event. The Miss Majorette of Canada title

is awarded based on a combination of total points from several events. All three girls were members of the pre-teen Gold and bronze medal teams who competed over the weekend. Starlight Destiny had over 30 individual medals won and finished with three gold medals, a silver and a bronze in the team events. Starlight Destiny Baton Club is now opening a chapter in the Georgetown. Del Giudice and Runstedler will be just a few of the coaches teaching a "Try it Free class" in Georgetown on Tuesday, Aug. 7 from 6-7 p.m. at Knox Presbyterian Church, located at 116 Main St. For info on the club, visit the website [www.starlightdestiny.ca](http://www.starlightdestiny.ca).

Photo by Eamonn Maher

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