



# Injured Players Making the Cut

*This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.*

**“I just went through soccer tryouts at my school. On first day, a kid sprained his ankle and was said to be out for two weeks or more. When coach posted varsity spots, there was the kid with the hurt ankle. Is it OK to pick an injured player for a varsity spot over a non-injured player?”**

## PCA Response by Amy Nakamoto, PCA Trainer–Washington, DC

Tryouts can be a daunting experience, where you publicly display all your strengths and weaknesses. That’s why PCA encourages coaches – at the beginning of a season, school year, or tryout period – to meet with the players to communicate their coaching philosophies and tryout process.

Within explanation of their philosophies, coaches should clearly articulate what they are looking for in their team members. The statement of philosophy combined with clear communication throughout the tryout process should then help guide selection decisions. Many coaches select players for their potential to contribute off the field (in addition to on-field talent and hard work) in terms of helping to establish team culture or chemistry, even if those players are not yet physically ready to contribute during their injured time.

Further, injuries in general are tricky. It is hard to know how each player responds physically and mentally to different injuries with regard to recovery time, re-injury, and rehabilitation time. It seems your coach may have weighed these factors in selecting the injured player, but if he or she did not explain philosophy and criteria in advance, it is easy to see why the decision seems unfair.

This is worth addressing in calm, private conversation with the coach both to determine criteria and to learn what improvements you or others cut from the team can make to improve your chances for next season.

*PCA Trainer Amy Nakamoto played soccer in the Olympic Development Program, then for North Carolina State University, and in the W-League. She has coached 10 years at the youth, high school and collegiate level, and has a master’s degree in sport psychology and education. Amy is executive director of DC SCORES, a Washington, DC-based non-profit, whose after school programs combine soccer and the arts.*

To read more questions and answers like this, or to submit your own question to the Ask PCA blog, visit:

[www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca](http://www.positivecoach.org/our-tools/ask-pca)

For more Resources, visit: [www.PCDevZone.org](http://www.PCDevZone.org)

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: [www.PositiveCoach.org](http://www.PositiveCoach.org)