



What's in Your Fall & Winter Soccer Wardrobe? Dressing Properly for the Conditions



As our warm and long Washington summer gives way to shorter, colder and rainy fall days it is very easy for players, parents and even coaches to forget to ensure our players are dressing properly for the conditions.

Ensuring players learn to dress properly for practices and matches will help reduce injury, ensure their optimal field performance and make their field time more enjoyable. It is never too young to stress to your players the importance of proper dress, warm-up and cool down.

The same rule that mom taught you all those years ago, still holds true when it comes to dressing a player properly;
LAYER!

1. **BASE LAYER** – many new, and somewhat pricey, fabrics have been made for helping to wick dampness away from the players body. It is this dampness by either perspiration or precipitation that causes the body to overheat in the summer and get cold in the fall and winter. Products such as Under Armor and Nike Pro tights and tops are available at local sporting goods stores and online soccer stores such Soccer.com. These come in various thicknesses and sleeve lengths and are specialized for heat dissipation (warm weather) or insulation (cold weather). If your player is interested in continued outdoor play in any sport purchasing a dedicated base layer is recommended. In a pinch a cotton T-shirt or mock or regular turtleneck may be substituted but is not as efficient as those mentioned above.
2. **T-SHIRT/UNIFORM JERSEY** – the second layer over the base should be a larger cotton T-Shirt or uniform jersey.
3. **SWEAT SHIRT/WARM UP INSULATION LAYER** – A larger cotton sweatshirt or poly-cotton or poly warm-up jacket should be next. This layer provides most of the insulation.
4. **NYLON WIND BREAKER OUTER LAYER** – This layer helps keep rain and wind out. Again, many products are on the market for this but in reality the garment should be light, single layered and breathable. The typical team warm up IS NOT appropriate for this function.
5. **LONG PANTS** – Here the typical polyester warm up pants are appropriate but they tend to soak up water quickly and do not insulate or block wind well. An alternate is a cotton lined nylon wind pant.
6. **HATS & GLOVES** – Yes, don't forget these. Knit hats and gloves should be available and/or worn at all practices as conditions dictate. It will be up to the referee on the field to allow these during official matches.

DRESS UP - STRIP DOWN – DRESS UP - The proper technique for providing maximum comfort and body protection during inclement weather is for the players to come to the field dressed in all or a combination of the layers mentioned above while having all the others available in their soccer bags. The players should dress up with the layers appropriate and comfortable for just standing outside. Yes, it will be a bit over dressed for participating in practice or a match. They should find what is comfortable then start warming up. As the body warms the player should start stripping off and/or substituting layers. This should be a slow process and not go from fully dressed to a T-shirt and shorts in one step unless the weather dictates. It may be necessary to experiment to find the correct layer combination comfortable for the workout.

Make sure players store their discarded layers in a dry place, like their soccer bags.

As players come off the field a quick cool down is NOT advised especially as players get older. Match substitutions and “stand around” times at practices in cold and rainy weather conditions dictate that players begin to IMMEDIATELY start putting back on their layers, one at a time, always ensuring they don't cool off too quickly.

EXAMPLE – The temperature is 40 degrees with a steady shower.

The player comes to the field in Under Armor, a T-shirt, sweatshirt and nylon windbreaker. As he/she begins warm up they notice that they are becoming quite hot. They take off their sweatshirt just using the Under Armor, T-shirt and windbreaker. As practice continues and the player warms they decide to discard the windbreaker (aw I'm hot and sweaty so what's a little rain). Unfortunately, the player gets kicked during a drill and elects to sit out the last 30 minutes of practice. He/she is pretty wet and puts on a clean dry, jersey from his/her soccer bag then the windbreaker. As he/she cools further, but before they become cold they put on the sweatshirt underneath the windbreaker. They have successfully warmed up, stripped down to comfortable layering and dressed back up in time to remain warm and (semi) dry.

OTHER TIPS - It is NOT necessary to spend lots of money for these layers. Simple cotton T-shirts, sweats, nylon outer shells, knit hats and gloves and USING THEM is all that is required. Remember to replace it after use.

- Carry an extra cotton T-shirt in your soccer bag. It's nice to have a dry T-shirt in either very hot or rainy days.
- If players arrive to practice or matches underdressed and start out wet and cold they will never regain warmth through exercise and are setting them up for hypothermia.
- Don't be afraid to wear a knit hat and gloves as required. - Always carry a large plastic garbage bag in your soccer bag. This can be used to keep your bag dry in rainy weather and can be used as an outer layer in extreme cases. Remember to replace it after use.