

5 things I'm loving about being a soccer mom

For the past couple years I've resisted enrolling our boys in organized sports. I didn't want to sacrifice our already limited family time. But at 5 and 7, they both wanted to play this season, so I'm becoming one of those mothers on the sidelines. I might even figure out a few rules of the game before the season ends.



To be completely honest, I'm not enjoying every aspect of this whole sports thing yet. I just don't seem to be able to find my groove. The boys' practices ended up on two different, consecutive nights, which is a little chaotic. But here is what I'm loving so far.

1. Our sons are so happy to be on the field. I know we will have some down moments, but right now they are sprinting onto the field for practice and smiling through the experience. They talk about it when they get home. They may not be the stars of their teams. They don't seem to care. I'm proud of them for showing up, learning a few things, and having a good time. And the brother whose team isn't practicing always seems to be able to find something to do.



2. After practices and games, they are exhausted. Add this to the start of school, and the tiring nature of kindergarten, and we are enjoying some quiet evenings around here. I've actually been able to have phone conversations without the usual pop-ins for water and stuffed animal updates and questions about God and life and which day it is tomorrow.



3. Children look so cute in uniforms. We haven't even received our younger son's, but our older son loves his uniform. How much fun is it to trade your Catholic school uniform for your soccer uniform? Why do we even buy other clothes?

4. I get two nights off from cooking. I'm listing this as something I like even though it's also a challenge, but so far, so good. We have Chick-fil-A, which is always popular, but we can't eat that all the time. So the other night I stopped at the grocery store and picked out some things I thought would work—chicken strips and deviled eggs and Lunchables. I think it's good that

soccer is good exercise since the nutrition of these meals is questionable. Because it was Brothers Day (the anniversary of the day we returned from China with our younger son and our boys met) I put together a bag of food (and Pez) for each of them to enjoy in the car. They were so excited.



5. The younger kids are just so much fun to watch. I had been feeling a little disgruntled after some long practices and scrimmages with our older son. He's loving it, but I was sitting in the prickly grass, dreaming of a chair which my husband has since purchased for me. But the older children are competitive and recognize who's playing well. The coaches actually care whether you score in the wrong goal.

But the little kids? They just run toward the ball—or sometimes away from it. They laugh and kick and sprint joyfully off the field for water breaks every two minutes. The ball sails over the goal and they try to throw it back over from the other side. They kick the ball and it goes the wrong way. Parents don't yell advice from the sidelines because no one cares. Everyone is having a great time and nothing gets accomplished.

The other night at practice I couldn't stop watching and smiling. Seeing those tiny little 4- and 5-year-olds play, following the ball around the field as if it were a magnet, I fell in love with soccer all over again. Or I would have if I had ever fallen in love with it before. But it was wonderful.

I still have quite a bit to learn, but I think I might figure it out before Thanksgiving. Meanwhile, if you can't find me, you know where I'll be, wandering around wondering where field number six is...or is it field number five? Either way, I'm the one with the chair.

Joining Jenna at Call Her Happy for Five Favorites.