



LAVENDER DAY CAMP STILL GOING STRONG IN SWAMPSCOTT

BY [HAROLD RIVERA](#) August 3, 2017



SWAMPSCOTT — Back in 2001, a pair of Swampscott girls high school coaches came together to organize an all-girls soccer camp without knowing what to expect. Now in 2017, the Lavender Day Soccer Camp stands as a summer tradition in Swampscott.

Fred Day and Cindy Lavender, both of whom have been at the helm of girls varsity soccer team at Swampscott, worked together in organizing the camp since its first running.

The idea for the camp sprung up in 2001. It began in 2002 as an all-girls camp that ran for two weeks at Phillips Park. Since then, the camp has expanded into a co-ed event that runs annually for one week at Phillips. Traditionally, the camp has taken place on the final week in July, into the beginning of August.

Along the way, Marc McHugh became involved and helped Day and Lavender with the marketing aspects of the camp by running its website. “I think back to 2001 when the idea for the camp came up and I know a lot of people were excited about it because everyone knew they could deliver a terrific product,” McHugh said. “It’s a year-round effort to make sure that these five days go on without a hitch. It’s terrific, not much lasts 15 years nowadays. We’ve lived up to the initial pitch and we continue to live up to it.”

Over the 15 years, Day and Lavender have received positive responses from the Swampscott community. On average, the camp includes 80-100 participants ranging from ages 6 to 15. Campers have the option of signing up for a half-day of soccer action or a full-day, for the duration of the week.

“This year, I don’t think we really advertised that much but we still wound up with the same number of kids,” Day, who coached the Swampscott girls varsity team from 2002 to 2009, said. “We’ve gone from the first year where we had 30-40 kids to, now after 15 years, we’ve been averaging anywhere between 80-100 kids for the past 10 years.”

“Kids keep coming back,” Day added. “We must be doing something right if we’re getting returnees.”

Campers are taught the basic fundamentals of soccer from a handful of local talents who serve as coaches for the week. This year's camp included a group of 20 coaches, many of whom were former campers themselves.

"We get a lot of kids working here who have been very successful soccer players, sharing their knowledge," Lavender, who served as head coach of the Big Blue girls team from 1996-2001, said. "A lot of our stars at camp end up coming back as coaches and have done very well."

The soccer fundamentals they learn at Lavender Day are skills the campers can carry on into their youth soccer careers.

"Personally, I just knew that they (Day and Lavender) had what it was going to take to deliver a very good foundation for a good week of camp," McHugh said. "These kids take these basic fundamental mechanics and they'll apply them for the rest of their lives. They're in the perfect position to do so, at the perfect age."

Aside from the fundamentals, Lavender, who teaches physical education at Swampscott High, also looks to challenge each of the participants at an appropriate level. That's where the balance between individual skill and team development becomes important.

"We try to find appropriate challenges for every level where they're working the balance of fundamentals, learning to compete and learning to play with teammates," Lavender said. "We do a lot of individual skill development but it's important to apply that to a team setting."

"By day two, we feel like we have everyone placed where they can be appropriately challenged and have the potential to grow," Lavender added.

Another key to the camp's success has been the work McHugh was dedicated to making sure Lavender/Day has its bases covered in terms of rules and regulations. McHugh said parents can send their kids to the camp with full confidence.

"Parents can rest easy because every state or municipal requirement or mandate is fully adhered to and complied with," McHugh said. "That's important."

"We wouldn't be here without Marc," Day, who also coached at Salem High from 2010 to 2014, added. "He crossed our T's and dotted our I's with state and town regulations. He made sure we had the right medical forms, insurances and trainers. We wanted to make sure we did this by the books so parents knew their kids would be safe when they came to us."

Campers have the option of signing up for a half or full day of action but most of the participants who choose the half-day change their minds after enjoying themselves on the first day.

"The camp has always offered a full day or a half-day," McHugh said. "Interestingly enough, the attendees who've signed up for a half-day, after they're here they tell their parents "we don't want to leave.""

Lavender/Day concludes on Friday, when the camp hosts its traditional "World Cup Day."

"We split the camp into two countries," Day said. "We'll have events all morning and they cheer for each other. Each age group goes against each other. The kids will dress up in the colors of their country, they'll paint their hair and make flags. We march them in like it's the Olympics and they love it."