



Parent Handbook

Fredericksburg Soccer Club Incorporated
www.fredericksburgsoccer.org
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Section 1 - What to Expect

1.1 - Our Philosophy

Our philosophy centers on player development. Player development is a paradigm that focuses on developing each individual player to their full potential. This approach provides a player with the best opportunity for growth contingent upon a player's passion for the game. This approach promotes the development of creative, skillful, and intrinsically motivated players. The result is that a player has the best opportunity to make a high school team, play in college, or reach any of their other goals in our program.

Winning is important but development is more important. We want our players to not fear failure by taking risks and making mistakes to improve. We want our players to strive for excellence and focus on task mastery. When done correctly, winning at the youth level is a byproduct of development even if it takes a while. We impress upon our players the following on gameday.

1. Play the game the right way
2. Individual merit is rewarded
3. Exhibit good sportsmanship
4. Play to win but never at the expense of the first 3 items

The measurement of success at the youth level is the improvement of a player over time. We want each player to have a competitive attitude and strong desire to win. However, winning does not measure player improvement or if a coach is doing a good job. If a team wins most of their games but the players do not improve, then the season is a disaster. In youth soccer, there are many who take shortcuts in development just to win games. We will not take shortcuts in development as we want to develop a well-rounded player.

1.2 – Implementation of our Philosophy

To implement our philosophy, our program operates under the following paradigm:

- A player is a member of the club and not a specific team.
- Improvement and learning are more important than being on a specific team
- Merit determines playing time and player placement.
- Everyone is expected to embrace challenges, adversity and struggle.
- We expect a player to compete and strive to win in all activities

The final decision on all soccer issues resides with the coaching staff, Technical Director, and Executive Director. These decisions include but are not limited to game day decisions, playing time, roster selection, coach selection, league selection,

tournament selection, season schedule, etc. All decisions must have technical justification. If there is no technical justification, the decision does not occur.

1.3 – Structure

The club consists of 3 main programs – Select, Futures, and Rec Academy. The club’s objective is to field at least one team in each age group in the Select Program and in the Futures program.

The select soccer program is for the player that seeks the best coaching, the best training, and a very competitive environment. It is our most challenging and competitive program. It provides a player with the best opportunity to make their high school team or move onto play college soccer. To join the select program, a player must tryout and be selected into the program.

The Futures soccer program is for the player that seeks a more challenging environment than our Rec Academy program without the full travel soccer experience. There are more practices than the Academy and a limited number of games outside of Spotsylvania County. The Futures program has a lower cost, reduced travel, and reduced time commitment compared to our Select Soccer program. To join the Futures program, a player must tryout and be selected into the program.

The FSCI Academy is a fun recreation program led by professional coaches that features skills development. All practices and games are in Spotsylvania County. This program is open to children of all experience levels. No tryout is required. Children can request to play on the same team as friends.

1.4 – The Coaches

FSCI chooses the coach for each team. FSCI places a coach where they are most effective at teaching. Some coaches will only work with certain age groups. Other coaches will remain with their age group over a sustained period.

Coaches are employees of FSCI. Coaches work for the club as a whole and not strictly for individual teams. FSCI reserves the right to change the coach of a team or age group at any point in time.

1.5 – Tryout Events

The club holds tryout events for the teams in the Select program and Futures program. The tryout event is merely a door that allows a prospective player possible entry into our travel program. Although existing players do not “try out” again at the “tryout event”, existing players must participate in the tryout events. Existing players work with prospective players that are trying out.

1.6 - Player Placement

Our goal for the composition of a team is to ensure that the talent range, the difference between the strongest player and the weakest player, is narrow. This allows practices to be more competitive. It promotes a mindset where no player can take anything for granted.

The placement of a player in the Select program and Futures program is also determined by asking the following question. If a player is placed on a specific team, will that player have the best opportunity to get playing time? If the answer is no, then the player will not be placed on that team.

Everything is based on merit. FSCI reserves the right to place a player on a different team at any point during the player's tenure in the club. In other words, a player's placement can change within a year, month, or the very next day after joining the program. FSCI reserves the right to combine age groups for a game or event on a temporary or permanent basis.

Team rosters are dynamic and fluid. The team roster can change at any point during the "soccer year" because the needs of player development outweigh the needs of the team. A team in our program is never "an island unto themselves". All our teams are centrally managed.

Player placement will NEVER be based on the following criteria:

- to benefit individual teams
- popularity
- "My friends are playing on a certain team".
- Parents want a player to play on a certain team

1.7 – Player Evaluations and Removal

In the Select program and Futures program, every day is a tryout. The coaches constantly evaluate players at practices and games. Our coaches are constantly evaluating a player over their body of work.

In advance of the next "soccer year", a player will be notified whether they are in "lock status" or "bubble status". "Lock status" means that a player does not need to tryout for the next "soccer year" and can proceed to register. Players that are in "bubble status" will have to tryout against the prospective players that attend tryout events. A player can be removed from the program at any time if there is commitment, discipline, effort, or performance issue.

1.8 - Additional Opportunities to Play

There is an opportunity for a player to get additional playing opportunities with other FSCI teams based on space available, merit, and the recommendation of an FSCI coach. A player can benefit from this approach as follows.

- Experience playing with different players or with players outside of their immediate social circle.
- The experience can provide an additional incentive for players to perform well with their own team.
- Experience a different set of challenges. These challenges provide important lessons on how to learn from more experienced players, how to play at a faster pace, etc.

1.9 - Playing with an Older Age Group

Under certain circumstances, a player can benefit from regularly playing with a team in an older age group. This will be based on the following reasons:

- It is in the best interest of the player's development.
- The player can compete well in the older age group.
- The player has a good opportunity for playing time in the older age group.
- The player has a good grasp of the fundamentals in the current age group.

1.10 – Roster Sizes

In the Select program and Futures program, we attempt to keep large roster sizes of players that are of a similar ability level. We do this for the following reasons.

- Maintain numbers if there are injuries
- Future-proof the age group against natural attrition
- Develop as many players as possible.
- Prevent players that are having commitment, discipline, or effort issues from affecting the integrity of the team

If we have a large roster size, additional games will be added. A player rotation system will be implemented to ensure everyone dresses for at least the minimum number of games in the membership plan.



Section 2 - Administrative Items

2.1 - Roles of Key FSCI Staff

Here are the roles for key staff members at FSCI.

Coach

- Responsible for teaching the players
- Implementation of the rules for the program and club culture
- Game day decisions
- Providing feedback or addressing issues about your child

Club Administrator

- Player Registration
- Ordering uniforms
- Payment issues
- Club wide administrative tasks

Technical Director

- Sets the curriculum for the programs
- Sets quality standards for the coaches
- Final determination on player placement

Executive Director

- Sets the strategic objectives of the club and programs
- Handles all business decisions, budgets, product management, and marketing
- Sets the cultural direction of the club
- Technology integration

2.2 - Registration

Each player must be properly registered in the club. The player checklist contains the registration requirements. The registration checklist is in the documents page within the select or futures program section of our website.

2.3 - Club Logo

The club logo or any of its intellectual property is not to be used for merchandising or other purposes without the express written consent from the Executive Director.

2.4 - Role of Parents

The club encourages parents to support their child's interest in the game in a manner that supports the spirit of youth sports and fair play. It is important to remember that this is a game for kids to enjoy and experience. Parents should not be emotionally wrapped up in the game. To ensure that the kids are having a positive experience and get the most out of the program, please note the following items:

1. Communication

- Parents must not “coach from the sidelines” during games and practices. This kills the enjoyment for the players.
- Refrain from criticizing your child's performance. The coach will offer constructive criticism in support of your child's development.
- On transporting your child home, please be supportive and always place the primary focus on the positive aspects of their game.
- Do not criticize your child's coach to your child or other parents. If you are not happy with the coach you should raise the issue with the coach.
- Do not criticize the players, their opponents, their parents, or the referee.
- Finally, remember that this is just a game. It's not life or death. There are far more important things in life than getting angry at a bad referee call or the outcome of a game.

2. Responsibility

- Develop a responsibility in children to bring their own uniform, equipment, and water bottle. Please don't carry these items to the field for them.
- When age appropriate, encourage your child to communicate issues with the coach. If your child is having difficulties or needs to miss a team event, encourage your child to speak directly to the coach. It builds character.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for their performance and to not place blame on others.
- Allow your child the freedom to play with their team without your active presence and evaluation. If you must stay at the field, please find something else to do. This “responsibility taking” is a significant part of maturing and allowing your child to claim ownership of all aspects of the game.

3. Good Habits

- Monitor eating and sleeping habits. Be sure that your child is eating the proper food and going to sleep at a reasonable time.
- Help your child to focus on the performance and not the result.
- Ask your child to focus on their skills and what they learned at practice



Section 3 – Position Statements

3.1 – Practice

The heart of what we do centers on practice. Practice is the most important event during the week because it's the only place where learning and improvement occurs. It's the only time when the coach has the most influence. Learning and improvement are limited on game day. Unlike other sports such as basketball or football, coaches have limited influence on game day because there are no timeouts, set plays, etc. Soccer is a player's game, not a coach's game.

3.2 - Tournaments

Tournaments are weekend long events. At least 3 games are played within 48 hours. Tournaments are fun for the players because of the camaraderie. However, tournaments are not conducive to player development and promote overuse injuries. Therefore, the club minimizes participation in tournaments.

Soccer is a physically demanding game. To perform at a top-level, players need adequate rest and recovery time before games. Tournaments schedule multiple games in a short time window do not provide adequate rest and recovery time. It is physically impossible for a player to perform at a top level when playing 3 or 4 games of almost full duration within 48 hours. The quality of the performance decreases as each game is played because the kids are playing fatigued, or the kids pace themselves. This goes counter to player development.

To mitigate the negative effects of tournaments, the club does the following.

- Prefers tournaments that have only one game per day
- When tournaments schedule 3 or 4 games on 2 days, we attempt to have a player play no more than a game's worth of minutes on one day.
- Take the maximum roster size to a tournament to mitigate the effects of overuse injuries and fatigue

3.3 - Soccer Rankings

There are websites that rank youth soccer teams primarily based on the results of tournament wins and losses. FSCI sees youth soccer rankings as providing no value to the youth soccer environment. The format of tournaments as a competitive platform is poor for the reasons outlined in the previous section.

3.4 - Breaks from Soccer

The game is physically demanding. It is important that players take care of their body to prevent physical and mental burnout. Players should integrate adequate rest and recovery time into their schedule. Mental and physical burnout is one of the reasons why the youth soccer dropout rate is 50-70% by 14 years old. It is not prudent for players to play soccer non-stop during the year. It does not improve the player. It only leads to burnout and promotes the onset of overuse injuries.

The offseason is important because the body needs time to recover after a long soccer season. There is nothing wrong with playing the occasional pickup game or occasionally touching a ball. However, it is not wise for players to participate in a multitude of camps or leagues during the offseason. Those activities are physically demanding and cut into rest and recovery time. Extra rest rather than extra training best serves each player. The players will be mentally recharged and physically ready when the new season starts. The body is being pushed beyond the point of diminishing marginal returns if a player doesn't take a break.

It's important to show up to practices and games well rested and hydrated. It's important to not participate in physically demanding activities prior to games or practices. When a player shows up tired, their performance drops.

3.5 - The Promise of College Soccer and Scholarships

Our club will never promise families that their child will get a full college soccer scholarship to have them in our program. This behavior exists with some coaches and soccer organizations. Our club considers this behavior unethical because it's misleading. The reality is that full soccer scholarships are rare. There isn't much money in soccer. There is more academic money available than athletic money.

Some members of our coaching staff have been through the college recruitment process as both a player and as a coach. Some of our coaches have coached players that went on to play college soccer. Based on our experience, here are some misconceptions on college soccer.

- It doesn't matter how good you are, if you don't have the grades, you aren't going to play. The first question that a college coach asks concerns grades.
- Full rides are rare to almost non-existent. Why would a freshman that's unproven at the college level get a full ride over a returning player that's proven at that level?
- The recruitment process is time-consuming. Soccer is not a big money sport like college football so scouts are not everywhere. As coaches, we spent a considerable amount of time networking with college coaches, sending recommendation letters, providing player profile books to scouts, etc.
- It's hard to predict with any certainty that a player at a young age will eventually play in college or pro. If a player is a top player at a young age, there is no guarantee that the player will be the top player in the age group at an older age. Motivation changes occur as a kid grows from 10 to 18 years old.

When a player is older and is serious about wanting to compete at the next level, that player will have the opportunity in our program. Please see our college recruitment program webpage on our website.

3.6 - School Soccer

The FSCI environment offers experiences that do not occur in a school soccer environment. The reverse is also true. Some of our coaches are in the unique position of having played and coached in both the travel and school environments.

The school soccer environment provides players with a social environment. Players represent their school in their community. There is generally more attention given to school events by friends, media, and the public. As coaches, we all played high school soccer and enjoyed the experience.

The FSCI environment provides players with the best instruction, best competition, and most opportunities for advancement under a curriculum model. Select soccer is generally for the more serious player that seeks to better themselves as a player. Recruiting by college scouts occurs at travel soccer events. It rarely occurs in high school soccer.

Strictly from a quality perspective, the FSCI environment is superior in terms of competition, instruction, and quality for the following reasons

- Our select program operates under a curriculum model. School soccer does not operate under a curriculum model to develop players over 10 years.
- Our travel program has mandatory coaching education standards. School soccer programs do not set any coaching education standards with their coaches.
- Learning and improvement occur at practice. The quality of the practice is critical to developing players. Our combination of curriculum and coaching education standards is a combination that does not exist in school soccer.
- The competition in travel soccer is much higher than school soccer.

3.7 - Leagues in Perspective

There is too much emphasis in youth soccer on the need to play in certain travel leagues or certain divisions within a travel league. This emphasis is misguided because it misses a fundamental point. Most of the time that a player spends is at practice. Practice is the only forum where improvement occurs and where the coach has the most influence. Therefore, competitive practices are more important than games in player development.

For a player to reach their goals, it comes down to the quality of the coaching at practice. Travel leagues have very little to do with player development. The quality of the travel league is limited by the fees charged by participating clubs. Clubs that charge high fees are not getting the best players at their club. This is why leagues do not develop players. Coaches develop players.

3.8 - Playing with Outside Teams/Clubs

Playing with a team outside FSCI is strictly prohibited because it is both a conflict of interest and a disruption to our program.

Per the club rules, players must abide by the commitment rules of our program. This includes all our practices, games, rest periods, and other events. It is disrespectful to one's teammates, coaches and to the program to miss our events in lieu of another travel club's events.

Yes, we firmly believe in the right of a player to play at the club of their choice. If a player wants to play at our club or another club, it is their right. However, it's not appropriate to play for two clubs simultaneously.

Playing with an outside club is nothing more than a recruitment tool for the other club. It doesn't serve any other purpose. It doesn't provide a unique opportunity or any benefit for the player. The player that guest plays with the outside club does not regularly practice with the outside club yet receives playing time. The player hasn't earned their minutes nor has been coached by the outside team coach. How is the guest player going to be effective? The other club can look for guest players within their own club if they need players.

FSCI does not allow players from outside our club to guest play with teams in our club. The outside player did not pay dues or regularly attend our practices. To allow a player from outside our club to take playing time away from players within our club is simply not ethical. If a coach within our club needs a guest player, then our coach would look internally for that player.

The notion that a player would make another club's events a priority over our events is disrespectful to our program. No consideration should ever be given to events at other clubs. If a player participates in our program, our program must be the priority.

3.9 – ODP & Personal Trainers

FSCI does not encourage or promote a player's participation in ODP. ODP is an overhyped, overpriced product that lost its relevance 20 to 25 years ago. ODP was rendered obsolete around the early 2000s with the advent of the US Development Academy and subsequently MLS-Next. The best players 25 years ago used to participate in ODP. That is certainly not the case now.

FSCI provides a supplemental Friday night program that is far more productive and far more affordable than ODP or personal trainers. The advantage of the FSCI supplemental program is that your child works with FSCI coaches that regularly interact with them. That is a huge advantage over ODP coaches or personal trainers because we understand your child's needs better.

FSCI coaches work with your child at roughly 70-80 practices during the year in addition to games. ODP or personal trainers cannot provide that level of interaction with your child.