



Parent Handbook

Fredericksburg Soccer Club Incorporated
www.fredericksburgsoccer.org
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Section 1.1 - Our Philosophy

FSCI focuses on player development and personal individual development. FSCI's philosophy focuses on developing the individual player to their full potential instead of focusing on team accolades. This approach promotes the development of creative, skillful, and intrinsically motivated players. This approach provides a player the best opportunity to reach their goals. More importantly, it provides a player an opportunity to life lessons.

Winning is important but development is more important. We want our players to not fear failure by taking risks and making mistakes in order to improve. We want our players to strive for excellence and focus on task mastery. This approach may result in less wins but the players turn out more skillful in the long run compared to players in a win-first environment. We impress upon our players the following philosophy.

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

At the youth level, the measurement of success is the improvement of players over time. Yes, winning games is great. We want our players to have a competitive attitude and strong desire to win. However, winning in itself 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 don't improve, then the season is a disaster. This situation happens quite a bit in youth soccer.

Section 1.2 – Implementation of our Philosophy

To implement our philosophy, it is important to understand that 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 and adversity
- A player will receive coaching from more than 1 coach on a regular basis

We operate under this paradigm to provide players an opportunity to be successful. For a player to grow, the player must be able to go thru and overcome adversity.

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.

Section 1.3 – Structure

The club's objective is to field two teams in each age group that operate under a different "level". Each level is designated as "orange" or "white". The "orange level" team has the most competitive and demanding environment. The "white level" team has the 2nd most competitive and demanding environment. This setup allows players to play in an environment that is appropriate for them.

Section 1.4 – The Coaches

FSCI selects the coaches for each age group. The players will interface with more than one coach during a season. FSCI is against the paradigm of having the same coach with the same group the entire season.

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.

Section 1.4 – Tryout Event

The club holds tryout events periodically. 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 the prospective players that are trying out.

Section 1.5 - Player Placement

Everything is based on merit. Placement is 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.

Based on merit, FSCI reserves the right to move a player between different teams at any point during a 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 season because the needs of player development outweigh the needs of the team. Teams in our program are never “an island onto themselves” because 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

Section 1.7 – Player Evaluations and Removal

The coaches constantly evaluate players at practices and games. In a sense, every day is a tryout because coaches are constantly evaluating a player over their body of work.

Every year, a player will be notified whether they are in “lock status”. “Lock status” means that a player does not need to tryout and can register in the program for the following soccer year. Players that are not in “lock status” will have to tryout again at the tryout events the club holds. A player can be removed from the program at any time if there is a commitment, discipline, effort, or performance issue.

Section 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 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.

Section 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 has the ability to compete well in the older age group.
- Player will receive playing time in the older age group.
- The player has a good grasp of the fundamentals in his current age group.



Section 2.1 - Roles of Team Managers and Coaches

FSCI has a club administrator that is the point of contact for the following items:

- Player Registration
- Ordering uniforms
- Coordinating other administrative logistics

Coaches are responsible for the “teaching”, technical soccer decisions, and some of the administrative items. The coach is the point of contact for the following items:

- Talking to parents on any issues covered in the “Club Rules” document such as playing time, commitment, conduct, etc.
- Everything else

Section 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 travel program section of our website.

Section 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.

Section 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 the 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 foods 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 3.1 – 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 occur. It's the only time when the coach has the most influence. Learning and improvement does not occur 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.

Section 3.2 - Tournaments

Most 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 the participation in tournaments.

Soccer is a physically demanding game. In order to perform at a top-level, players need adequate rest and recovery time before games. Tournaments that schedule multiple games in a short time period do not provide adequate rest and recovery time. It is physically impossible for a player to perform at a top level when playing 3-4 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; which goes counter to player development.

The club encourages tournaments that are in compliance with the recommendations in the USSF Player Development Guidelines. The ideal tournament participation conditions are that players play in only one game per day or play no more than a game's worth of minutes on one day.

Section 3.3 - Soccer Rankings

There are youth soccer ranking websites that rank individual teams for a specific geographic area. The ranking systems weigh tournament results heavily.

The rankings have little value in light of the preceding section on tournaments. If the club made the primary focus of tournament participation about winning, then player development is sacrificed. Developing players is the first priority for our club.

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 travel 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.

Section 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 in order 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 and it's amazing how many buy into the college soccer scholarship myth. 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. There are a limited number of scholarships at D1/ D2, and none at D3. The scholarships are split between the 25-30 kids on a team if the school fully funds all scholarships. Plus, 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.

Section 3.6 - School Soccer

Our travel soccer 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 are representing their school in their community. There is generally more attention given to school events by friends, media, and the general public. As coaches, we all played high school soccer and enjoyed the experience.

Our travel soccer environment provides players with the best instruction, best competition, and most opportunities for advancement under a curriculum model. Travel 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 technical soccer perspective, our travel soccer environment is superior in terms of competition, instruction, and quality for the following reasons

- Our travel program operates under a curriculum model. School soccer does not operate under a curriculum model to develop players
- Our travel program has mandatory coaching education standards. School soccer programs do not set any coaching education standards with their coaches.
- Learning and improvement only occur at practices. The quality of the practices is critical to developing players. Our combination of a 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.

Section 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. The majority of 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, practice is more important than games in player development.

For a player to reach their goals, it comes down to the quality of the coaching at practices. Travel leagues have very little to do with player development. Leagues do not develop players. Coaches develop players.

Section 3.8 - Guest Playing with Outside Clubs

Guest playing with a team outside our club is strictly prohibited because it is both a conflict of interest and a disruption to our travel 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 travel 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.

Guest 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.

It is important to note that we do not allow players from outside our club to guest play with teams in our club. That's a matter of principle because 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 right. 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.